


THEN & NOW



A modern-day photograph of a street in Vacaville. The street is paved and has several cars parked along the side. On the right, there is a large, leafless tree. Behind the tree and to the left, there are several buildings. One building has a sign that says "JACKSON MEDICAL SUPPLY". Another building has a sign that says "5-10-15 STORE". The sky is overcast.

VACAVILLE



A historical photograph of the same street in Vacaville. The street is unpaved and has several vintage cars parked along the side. On the right, there is a large, leafless tree. Behind the tree and to the left, there are several buildings. One building has a sign that says "5-10-15 STORE". Another building has a sign that says "Bank of". The sky is overcast.

Carole Noske and Brian Irwin
Vacaville Heritage Council

THEN & NOW

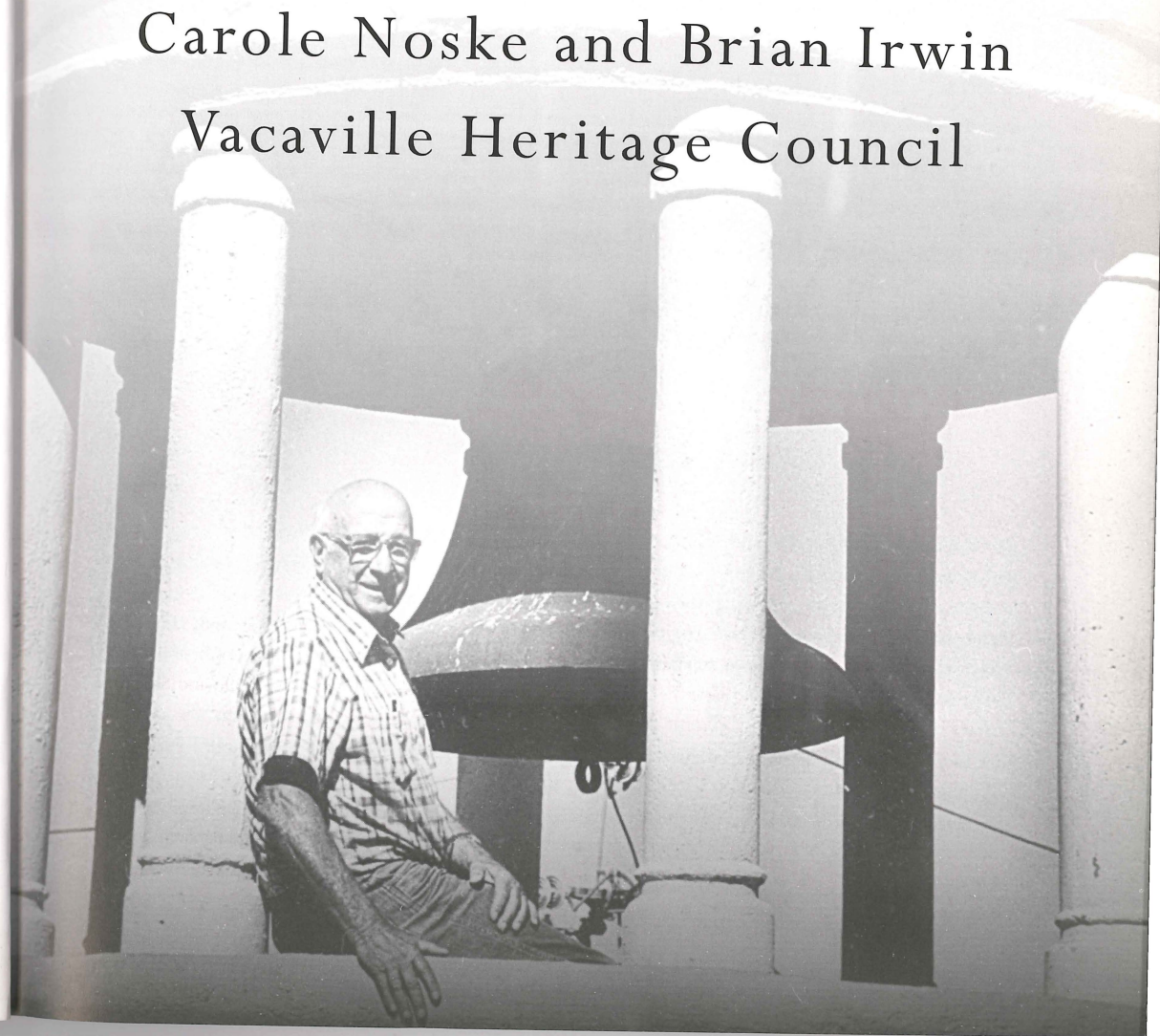
VACAVILLE

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Carole Noske and Brian Irwin
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OPPOSITE: The late Bertram "Bert" Hughes, former president of the Vacaville Heritage Council, takes a well-deserved break from roof repairs on the rim of the bell tower atop Old Town Hall in 1978. Designed in 1907 by county engineer F. A. Steiger as a joint project of the Town of Vacaville and Solano County, the building was only the second reinforced concrete structure erected east of the Mississippi and was completed by builder F. M. Gray at a cost of \$5,160. Vacaville hardware merchants Schroeder and Lawrence furnished the steel cells and doors for the jail at a cost of \$310 and submitted a total bid of \$527 for the cells and installation. The trustees balked at this extra expense and Mr. Schroeder agreed to do the installation for \$10. In 1987, the cost of renovations was \$105,500, which included replacing the eight concrete pillars that support the top of the bell tower. (Courtesy Vacaville Heritage Council.)



This book is dedicated to the memory of Bertram "Bert" Hughes, the founders, and the members of the Vacaville Heritage Council who had the foresight to preserve Old Town Hall as a repository of the memories of Vacaville and Solano County.

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ISBN 978-0-7385-5563-8

Library of Congress control number: 2007928548

Published by Arcadia Publishing
Charleston SC, Chicago IL, Portsmouth NH, San Francisco CA

Printed in the United States of America

For all general information contact Arcadia Publishing at:
Telephone 843-853-2070
Fax 843-853-0044
E-mail sales@arcadiapublishing.com
For customer service and orders:
Toll-Free 1-888-313-2665

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ON THE FRONT COVER: The buildings on the east side of the 600 block of Main Street are some of the oldest commercial buildings remaining in Vacaville. With the exception of the 1920 bank building on the corner, all were constructed using brick shortly after fire destroyed the entire business district in 1884. On April 19, 1892, an earthquake toppled the facades of many buildings along Main Street, but they were quickly repaired, and these buildings remain completely occupied to this day. (Courtesy Vacaville Heritage Council.)

ON THE BACK COVER: Always looking for a reason to have a parade, two were held on July 4, 1898. This one, with the theme "Remember the Maine!", followed by a children's parade for the dedication of the new high school. The Masonic Hall shown on the left was destroyed by fire in May 1939, and newer buildings have replaced most of the other structures on the west side of the street. (Courtesy Vacaville Heritage Council.)

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A special thank you belongs to all the families of Vacaville and Solano County who over the years have shared their photographs, memories, and memorabilia with the Vacaville Heritage Council. All images in this book are courtesy of the Vacaville Heritage Council and the authors.

Thank you also to our historians past and present: Bert Hughes, Bob Allen, Jerry Bowen, Thomas Buckingham, Art Dietz, Dave Fleming, Wiley Killingsworth, John and Richard Rico, Rodney Rulofson, Sabine Goerke-Shrode, Ernest Wichels, Wood Young, and many others for their writings, research, photography, and guidance.

For their photographic work in the late 1800s, which is treasured by all, we can not fail to recognize Prof. Otto Ryhiner with his pinhole camera, whose images were damaged by fire, and Edlif Pyle for rescuing them and adding his own views of Vacaville and the Valleys.

The hands of many volunteers at the Vacaville Heritage Council have contributed to compiling and archiving the memories shown on these pages, foremost among them Ruth Holtz, who kept everything in order, and Roberta (Gates) Ormas, who established and cataloged our history library dedicated in her name. We regret that space does not allow acknowledging every one of our volunteers by name.

And lastly thanks to Jerry Bowen, who convinced us to do this book and has provided support throughout the project.

INTRODUCTION

Vacaville is situated at the point where the south end of Vaca Valley opens into the Central Valley of California at an elevation of 180 feet. The sharp contours of the English Hills separate the Vaca Valley from the Central Valley on the east. Beyond a low range of hills to the west is Lagoon Valley. Farther west, the Vaca Mountains rise to an elevation of 2,000 feet four miles from the city.

The lush valley was first home to a Native American population of Patwin Indians known as the "Ulati" who occupied an area that included the Lagoon Valley and the very heart of town. In 1842, Spanish settlers Manuel Vaca and Juan Felipe Peña came from New Mexico and applied for a Mexican land grant. They each built an adobe dwelling on adjoining parcels in Lagoon Valley; the Peña Adobe survives to this day as a state historic landmark.

On August 21, 1850, Manuel Vaca sold a square English league of land to William McDaniel with the provision that one square mile was developed as a town to be named Vacaville. Incorporated in 1892, the economy was based almost entirely on cattle and fruit cultivation until the post-World War II era. The climate gave Vacaville an advantage in the marketplace, and it became known as the "early fruit district." Fruit shipments to the eastern market was the source of many a family's fortune, and this is reflected in structures that were erected during that time period, many of which remain to this day.

During the early years, the town suffered several devastating fires—one in 1877 and another on the night of November 7, 1888. Driven by a north wind, within minutes it consumed all the buildings on the north side of Main Street all the way to the bridge, and jumping across Main, the fire claimed the Davis Hotel and the others structures back to Elizabeth Street. Even after the destructive 1877 fire, Vacaville still did not have a fire department, and citizens tried using blankets and buckets to fight the flames, but in the end, only rubble and embers remained of two entire blocks. Rebuilt of brick, the south side of the street never suffered another major fire, but the shops and saloons on the north side, which were quickly rebuilt from wood, were again destroyed on August 28, 1890, when someone set fire to Chapman's Harness and Saddlery Shop on the corner of Dobbins and Main Streets, and the winds again drove the fire all the way to the creek.

In 1892, the area around Vacaville, Dixon, and Winters was struck by a major earthquake, and while Vacaville suffered the least damage, most of the new brick structures had their facades tumbled into the street. The earthquake damage was repaired, and most of these buildings are still standing today.

Vacaville has grown rapidly since the 1940s, when the population was 1,608; the small village that sprang up to serve the early ranches and orchards of the 1850s is now a vibrant city. The south side of town had for years been separated by the heavy traffic along Highway 40 until construction began on a six-lane freeway along the southern edge of the city in 1961. With the new overpasses and freedom from the constraints of heavy traffic, the city soon saw residential growth to the south, along with supporting schools and retail centers. The addition of another freeway at the north end of town encouraged

the development of business parks that are now home to medical centers, offices, warehouses, light manufacturing, and a growing life-science industry. As the population now approaches 100,000, an ever-expanding inventory of housing now occupies much of the former orchard and ranch land. In a cooperative effort with the neighboring town of Dixon, a greenbelt area was purchased that will serve as a buffer between the towns and a reminder of the agricultural heritage of the valleys.

The citizens of Vacaville are proud of their roots and have preserved much of their history through the adaptive reuse of the heritage buildings. A thriving downtown business district is located in buildings dating back to the late 1800s. In 1961, when the redevelopment agency proposed removal of some of the city's oldest buildings in the heart of the downtown, the community reacted by removing the city council and mandating an end to redevelopment. One of the buildings saved from destruction is the 1907 town hall, which is owned by the City of Vacaville and now serves as home to the Vacaville Heritage Council's archive of history and over 6,000 photographs, the Solano County Genealogy Society Library, and also the business offices of the Solano County Historical Society and the Peña Adobe Historical Society. The Vacaville Heritage Council Website at www.VacavilleHeritageCouncil.org lists many of the resources available; the photographic index includes the names of the families who have donated to our collections. We are currently seeking grants and donations to place our entire collection online for public access.

As the community celebrates the 100th anniversary of the dedication of "Old Town Hall" of July 18, 2007, it is with both pride and in some cases sadness that we look back at the changes that have taken place, to quote Richard Rico's column in the *Vacaville Reporter*, "since the time when everyone knew your name."

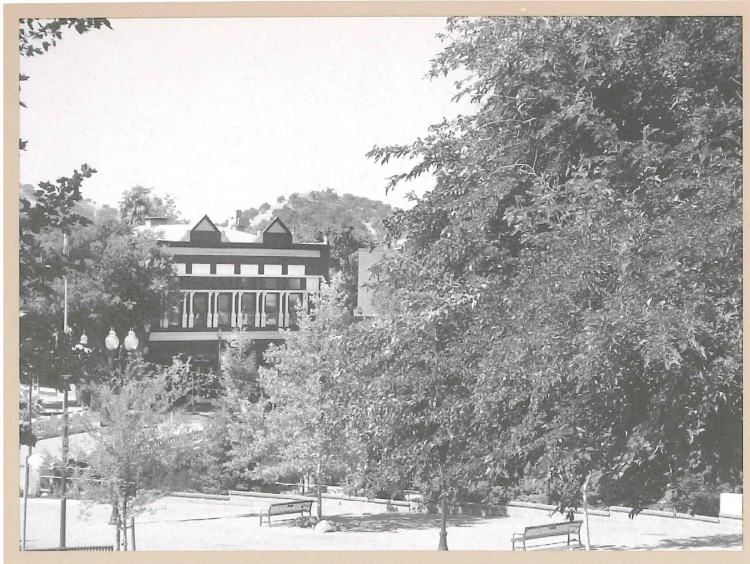
1 CHAPTER

MEMORIES



A favorite spot for picnics and parties in early Vacaville was Towson's Grove, located east of Pleasants Valley Road and north of Foothill Drive.

This 1896 photograph shows the young ladies weaving the Maypole at the May Day picnic. Note how formally they are dressed to go on a picnic.



In 1883, F. B. Tucker erected Vacaville's first jail: a 10-foot-high wooden building measuring 12 feet by 16 feet in diameter was placed on the creek bank. One night, it is told, two inebriated occupants dismantled the jail, and after neatly

stacking the wood, both went home. When the little jail was pushed down into the creek by vandals, plans were begun for a town hall. The trees that surround the Creekwalk Plaza now obscure the 20th-century view.



The entire student body of Vacaville High School, all four grades, are pictured in front of the cottage on Parker Street owned by Fred Chandler, which served as the high school for six years before the classes were moved to the second floor of the brick

grammar school in 1896. The high school finally had its own home when George Sharpe completed the building in 1898. This site is now the parking lot of Teriyaki House directly behind the city's new transportation center.





Located on the northwest corner of Main and Dobbins Streets, Frank C. Chapman's Harness and Saddlery Shop was a busy place when this photograph was taken. In August 1890, an arson fire that started in the shop destroyed all the

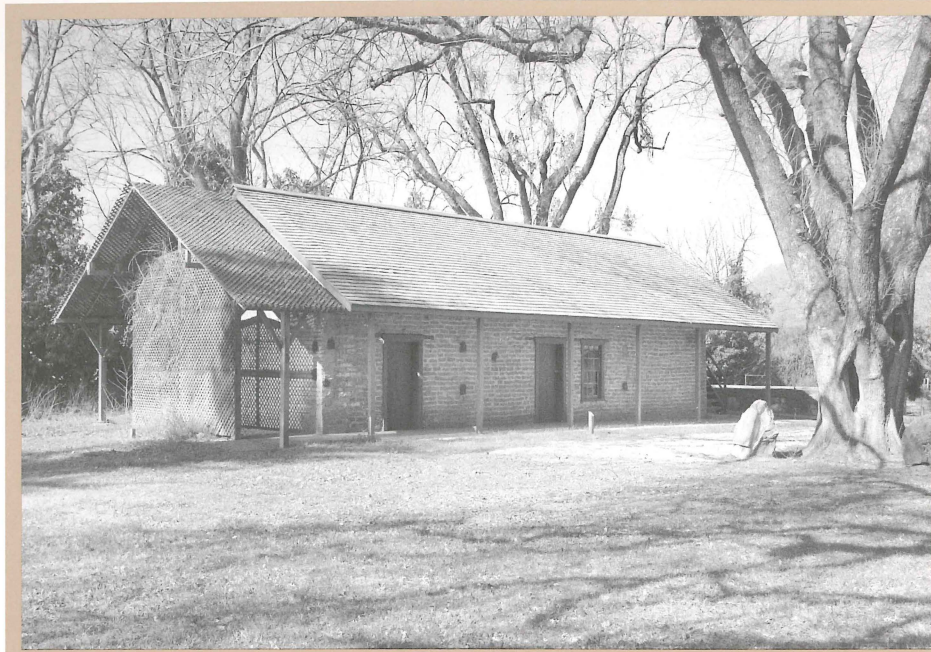
businesses and homes from Main Street north between Dobbins and the Ulatis Creek Bridge. The offices of Kappel and Kappel Realty are now located on this site.



The Rogers boys ride in their governess's pony cart past the Baptist church on School Street about 1900 in one of Vacaville's many parades. The unoccupied church building was removed in the early 1920s when the Ulatis School Auditorium

was constructed on the northwest corner of McClellan Street. The school was torn down in 1953 when state safety inspectors ruled it was structurally unsafe. The steps and parts of the foundation walls of the auditorium remain.





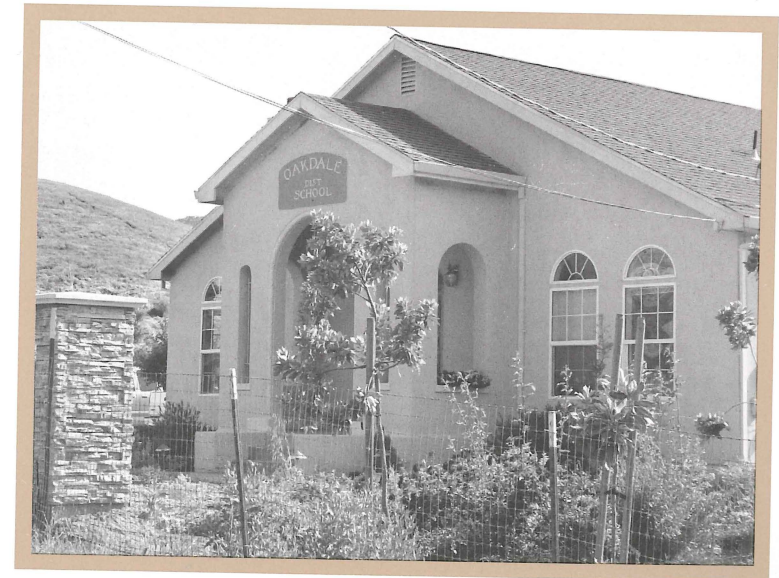
The adobe erected by Juan Felipe Peña in 1842 stands as the centerpiece of Peña Adobe Park. Designated as a historic landmark in 1955, it was donated by William Goheen and the Phil Mowers family in 1959. Shown after it was sheathed in a

wood frame to protect the adobe walls and add additional living space in the 1880s, the addition has now been set off to one side and serves as a small museum. Tours are available by appointment through the Peña Adobe Historical Society.



The first Oakdale School, shown, was built in 1885, and this photograph of the teacher and student body was taken in 1886. When a new schoolhouse was built in 1935, it was said to be the noted division point between the Pleasants and Vaca Valleys. Most rural district schools served a dual

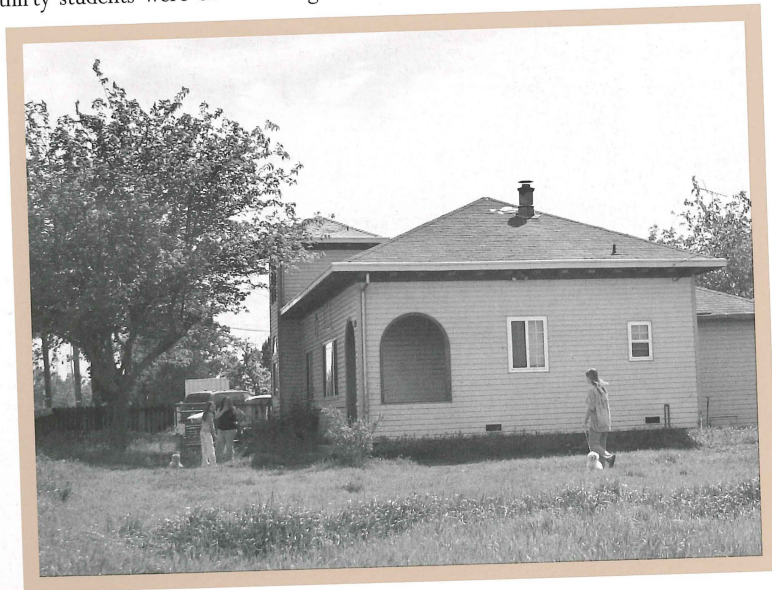
function, as classroom by day and at other times as the community meeting and social hall. When the last semester ended in 1960, the property was sold and the building renovated; today it is a beautifully maintained private residence.





Superintendent A. P. Sanborn's 1899 census report showed the Browns Valley district with 25 children between ages 5 and 17 and eight children under age 5. When the first class met at this new building in 1920, thirty students were enrolled in grades

one through eight and all were taught in a single, large classroom. A new, year-round campus called Browns Valley was later built on Wrentham Drive. This building, once abandoned in ruins, is now a home, and once again children play in the yard.



In 1895, James Monroe Parker built Vacaville Steam Laundry at what was later given the address of 406 Merchant Street. He operated the business until 1898 when he sold to the Miyashita family who returned to Japan in the 1920s. Several other successful operators followed, and many people

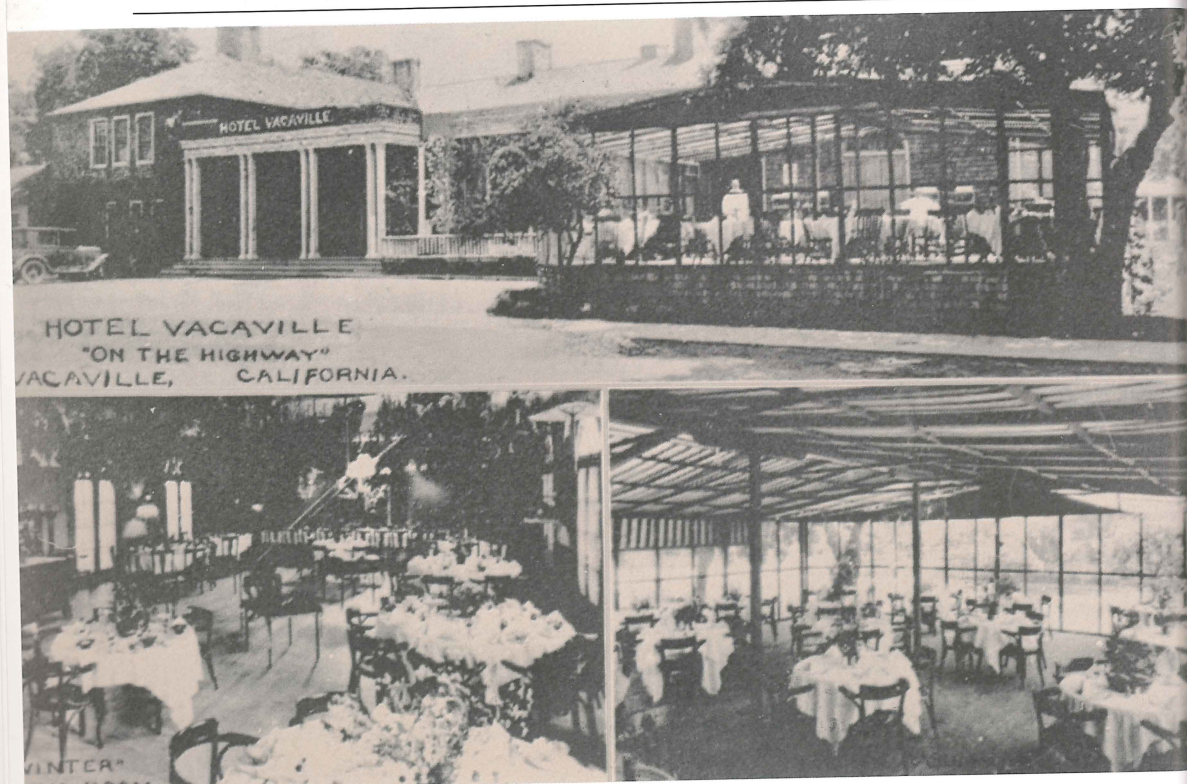
were employed. The Vacaville Steam Laundry truck pictured in 1925 serviced routes throughout the city. Demolished in 1949, another very successful family business, Pietro's Pizza, placed a building on the site in 1956 with an entry that faces Cernon Street.





The Vacaville Hotel was a welcome addition when it opened to much hoopla on Merchant Street near the corner of Mason Street in 1920; the town had been without a hotel since the Raleigh Hotel fire in 1909. In 1936, a fire claimed the two-story section

of the hotel, and the Saturday Club took over the remainder as their meeting hall. Bank of America built there in 1956, relocating the Saturday Club to Kendal Street, and U.S. Bank has the current building on the site.



Nestora Lyon's Casa Maria Restaurant, on Merchant Street across from the Triangle Building, was named in honor of her mother, Maria Vaca Peña Lyon, a member of the founding family of Vacaville. She advertised dining and dancing under the trees in the open courtyard. To entice

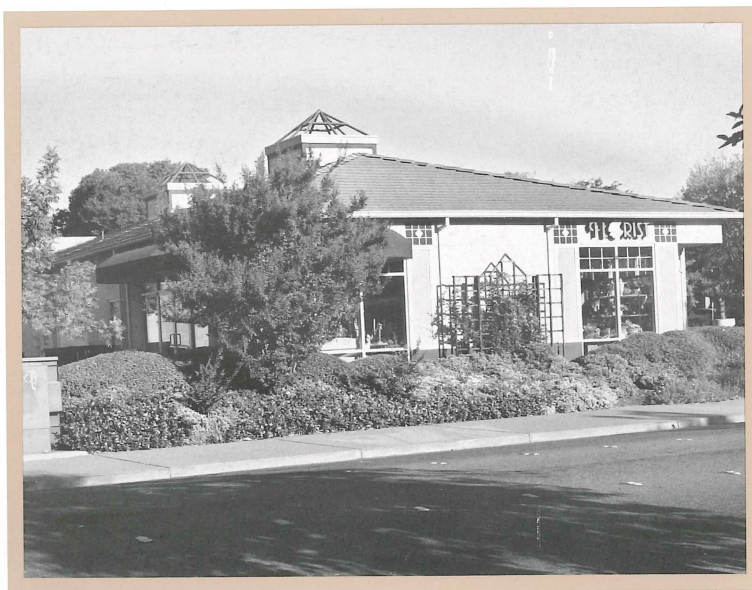
travelers along the Lincoln Highway in the 1930s, she offered lunch for 50¢, dinner for 75¢, fountain specialties, candies, and afternoon tea. Cheers Pub, Chancellor Graphics, and other small shops now occupy this space.





By 1902, one-third of the orchard land in the Vaca Valley was owned or rented by the Japanese, and those of the Buddhist faith made plans to build a temple. Dedicated November 13, 1912, the delightful structure was on the southwest corner of Monte Vista Avenue and Dobbins Street; a Japanese

language school opened on the adjoining Dobbins Street lot in 1928. The temple was destroyed by fire in November 1951, but application has been made for a state historical marker on the site. Pearson's Florist is now located here.



Fire chief Warren Hughes finally got the new firehouse he wanted in 1957, when the volunteer firefighters contributed over 3,000 hours of labor and the community added another 500 man-hours. Until that time, the department had always

had a place to store its equipment, but never a place to call home. As the city expanded, four new firehouses were built in other locations, and the John McBride Senior Center was built on the old firehouse site.





A hitching post can still be found in front of the house at 325 West Street. Aleen Burton, a longtime Vacaville resident, is shown greeting visitors at her gate. The square cement pillars with a large metal

ring imbedded in the top for tying the reins can also be found on Cernon Street and other streets in that area.



Vacaville's first strip mall, in the 600 block of Merchant Street, was the location of the Lorenzo family's Vaca Valley Shopping Center and the McKenzie family's Pacific Ace Hardware, which still remains on the site as Solano County's

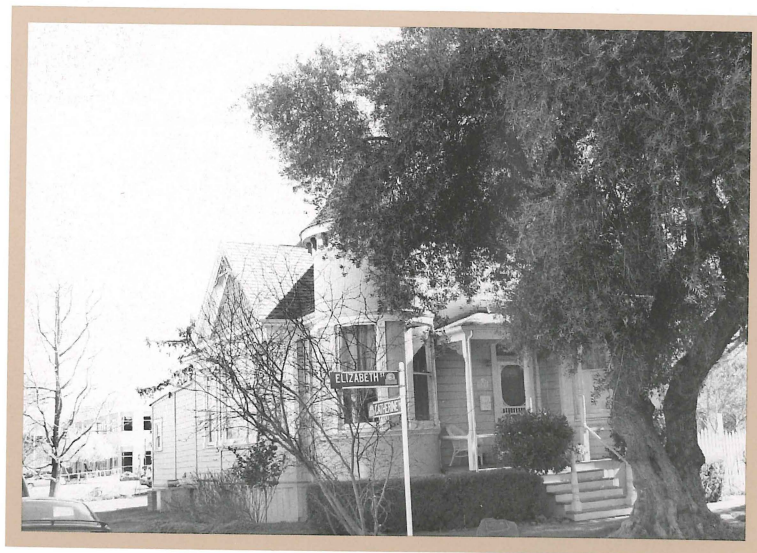
favorite hardware store. Albert McKenzie started the business with a general store in the town of Monticello in 1893, and it was relocated to Vacaville in 1957 when Monticello was inundated with water by the dam that created Lake Berryessa.





The hundreds of Vacavillians who were born there lovingly refer to this small, Queen Anne cottage at 331 Elizabeth Street built in 1888 as "Dr. Jenney's Hospital." Built as a residence, it was converted to a maternity hospital and outpatient clinic by Ann Tillman for the use of Dr. Warren Jenney so

his patients would no longer be required to go to Fairfield. The first baby, Vance Killingsworth, was delivered on June 13, 1932, and many more would follow until the state forced its closure in 1946. It is once again used as a residence.



CHAPTER 2

THE MASTER BUILDERS



This publicity piece from 1905 of the mansions along Buck Avenue clearly shows the artistic workmanship of the master builders of that time. Most of the homes are the work of master builder

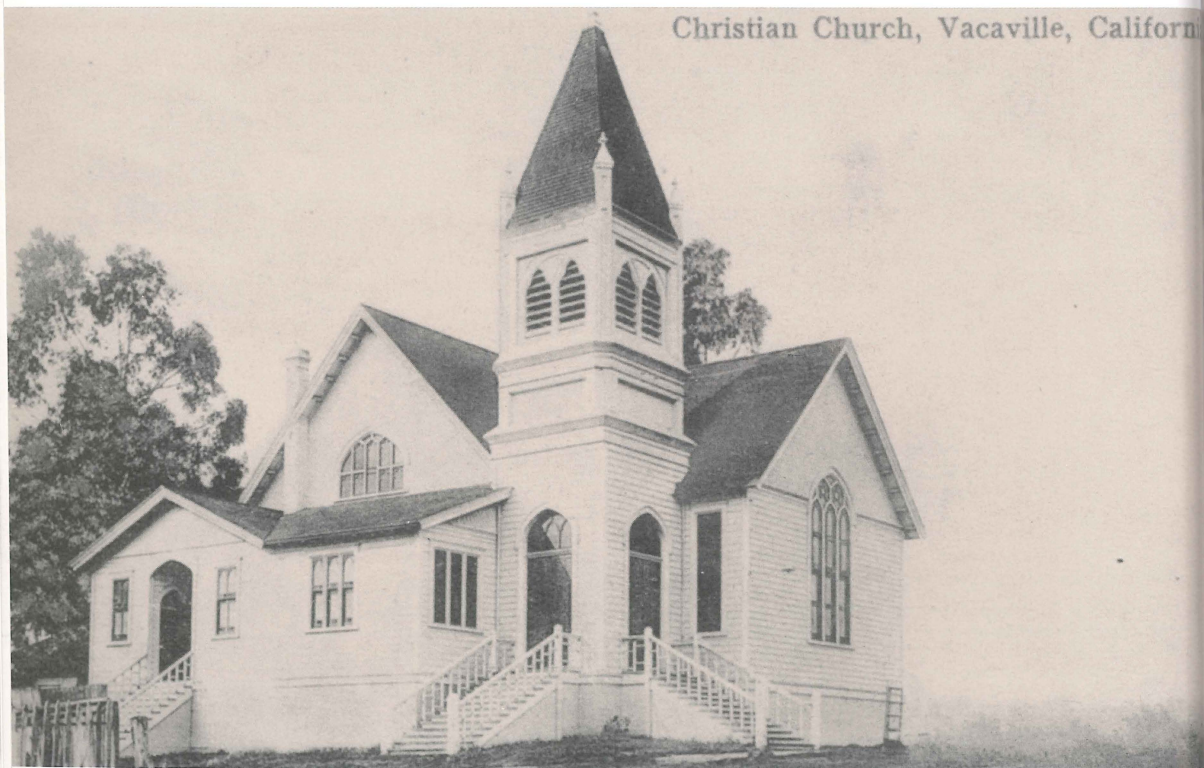
George Sharpe. Some of these homes can still be viewed today at 201 Buck Avenue, 212 Buck Avenue, 225 Buck Avenue, and 301 Buck Avenue.



In 1891, the Christian Church awarded a contract for \$4,975 to George Sharpe for a new building on their property near the southeast corner of Catherine and Wilson Streets, to be completed in 90 days. During the Depression, George Sharpe repurchased the building, and it was dismantled, the redwood lumber being used to build homes in

the area. Vacaville's oldest established church, the Christian Church of Vacaville, is now located at 66 Vine Street. Opportunity House, a shelter for homeless families, is currently located on the site but will be moving, as redevelopment of the entire area will begin shortly.

Christian Church, Vacaville, California



In 1898, George Sharpe erected the Vacaville High School, and in 1908, he demolished the 1885 brick grammar school building shown that was weakened in the 1892 earthquake, and he built a new school building on the same site. The schools

stood as proud monuments on Andrews Park Hill for many years. A plaque and the bells from the two schools mark the location of the high school, and the school district offices are on the former grammar school site.





This magnificent residence of Sidney C. Walker once stood at 324 Catherine Street on the southwest corner of Davis Street near the Walker Opera House. Like many of Vacaville's large homes, it was converted to apartments to provide

wartime housing. A fire that originated in one of the apartments severely damaged the house on November 13, 1959, and it was demolished. Today the site is occupied by a parking lot.



James Koford built this Victorian house at 118 Main Street in 1897 for Irene Moore for \$1,300. George Gates purchased the home in 1903, and it remained in the family for three generations until 1977. The carriage house in the

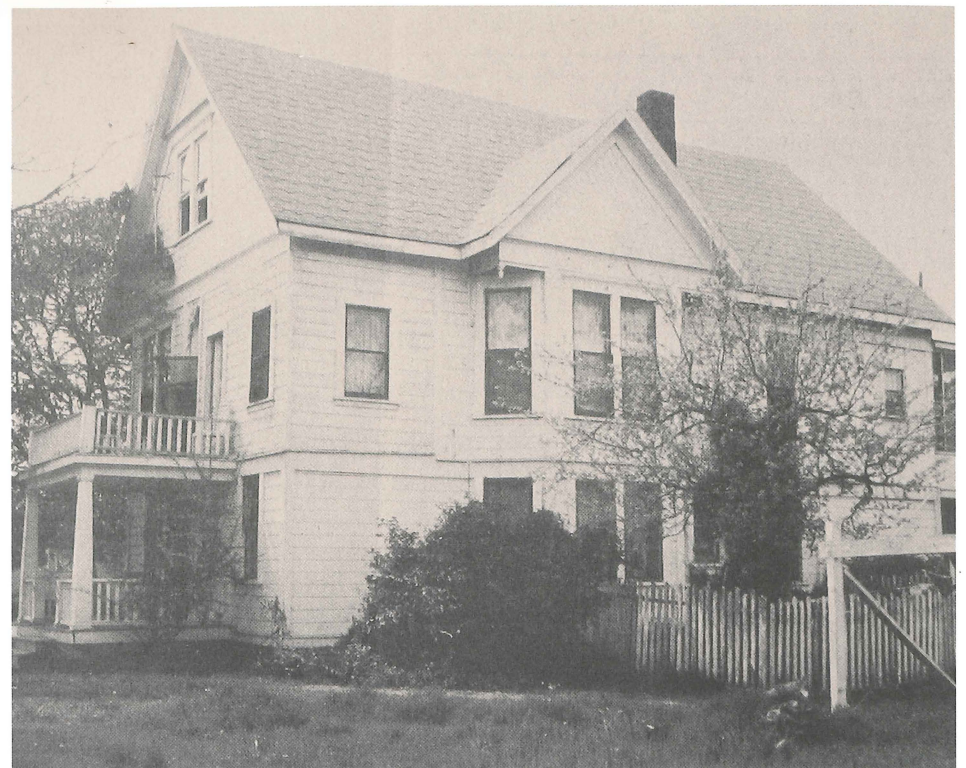
rear was once a two-story hay barn and stable. Still used as a residence, a 1977 addition doubled the size of the home, but the only visible change from the front is the alteration of the front porch.





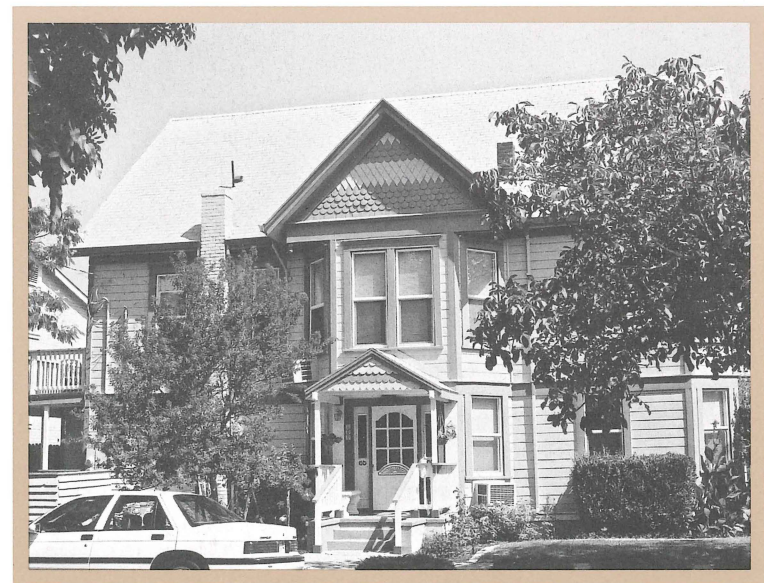
The three-story Colonial Revival-style house at 306 Buck Avenue was one of several that George Sharpe built for himself only to later sell and build another. The 1896 home was sold to hardware merchant W. E. Lawrence in 1905; in 1914,

Lawrence in turn sold to George P. Akerly, once a leading merchant in Vacaville, who later transferred the house to his son, George P. Akerly Jr. Today the exterior of the home appears exactly as it was constructed.



The home on the corner of Luzena and West Streets was moved from its prior location on the northeast corner Parker and Merchant Street in 1925 to make room for a service station at a time when Merchant Street was part of the Lincoln Highway

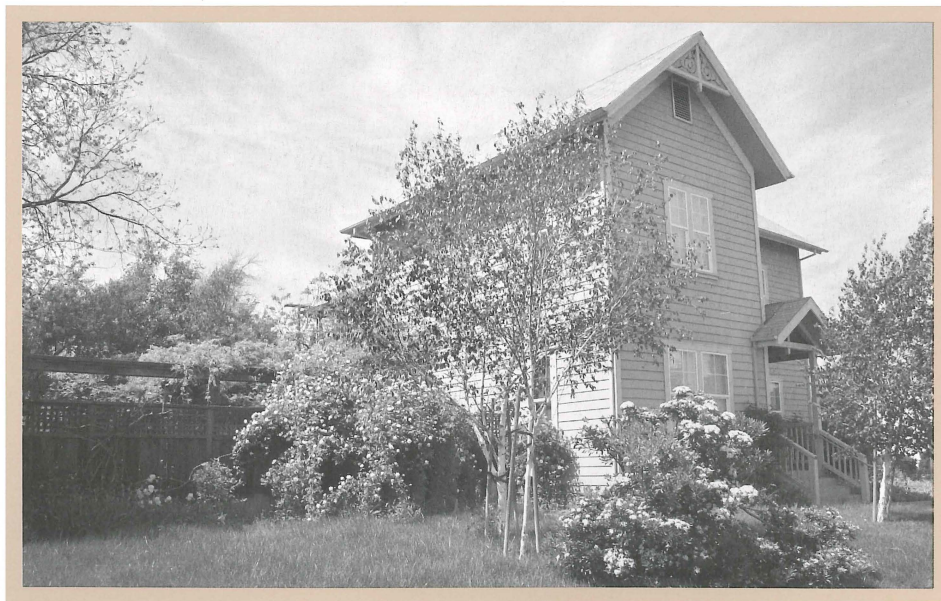
to Sacramento. Purchased from a Mrs. Brown by Tina Mowers, it was converted to four apartments after the move. Beautifully restored, it is now appears to be a private residence once again.





Constructed some time before 1893, little is known of the origin of the house at 500 Davis Street, located outside the town limits. Built for a Mr. Blake, this was Ellen Phillips's boarding house in 1907. The landlady and her eight children

catered mostly to the teachers from the nearby schools. Their special treat was fresh milk from the cow they kept pastured out back. In 1995, Nancy French purchased, restored, and remodeled it into 3,300 feet of commercial space.



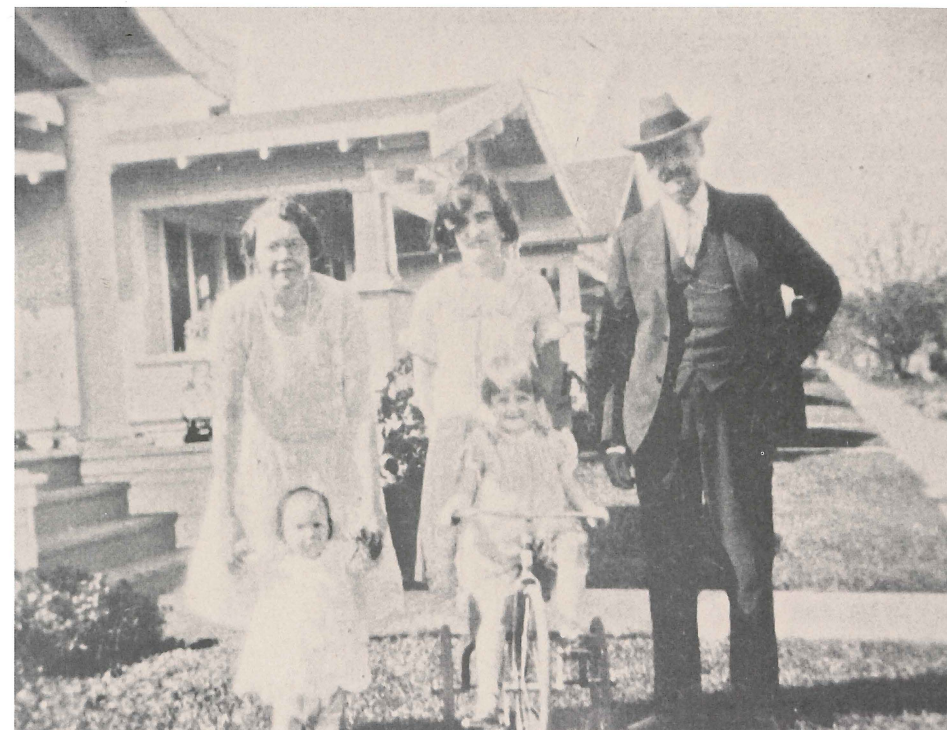
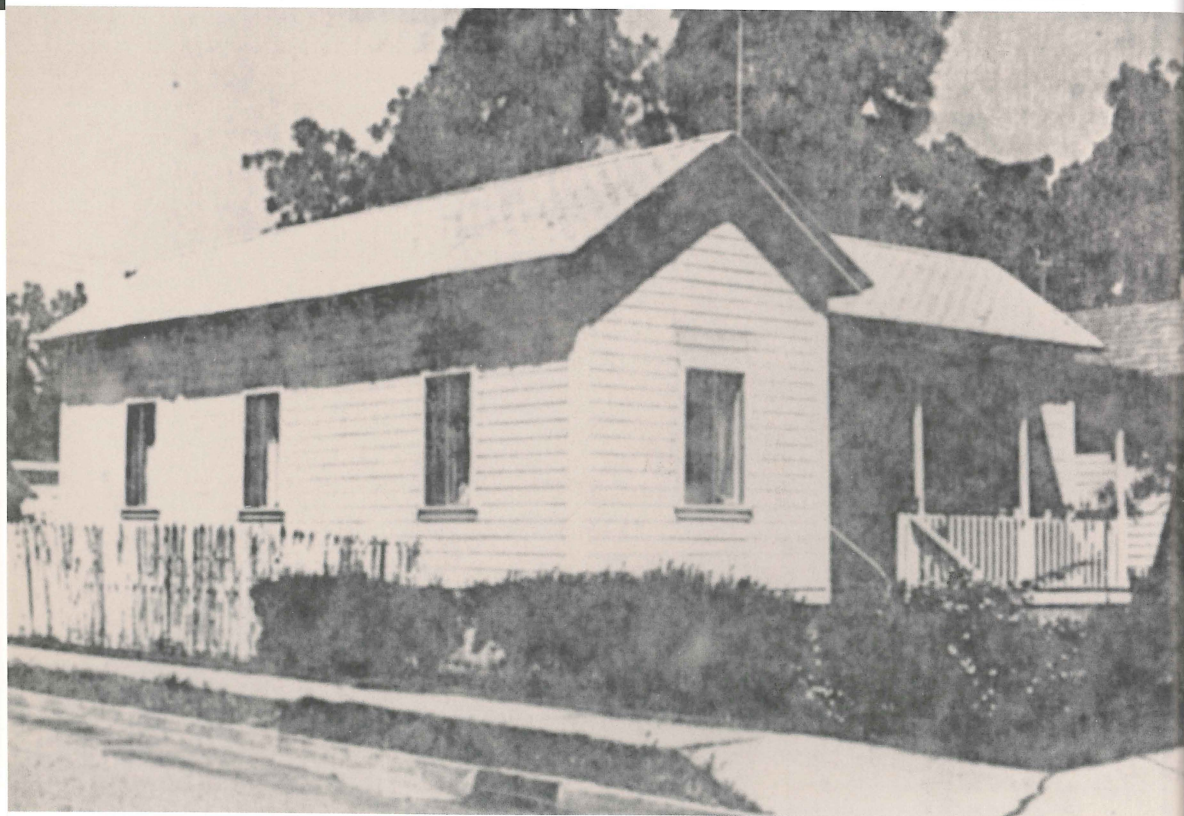
In 1886, when W. W. Smith built his house and a barn, he selected a spot in a grove of trees against the foot of the hill north of Vaca Valley Road and east of Bucktown Lane. In 1879, he had 165 acres

planted with 4,000 cherry trees. Later Dr. Irving W. Robbins purchased the ranch, and it became known as the Ulatis Ranch. Today nothing remains of the orchard and buildings.





Vacaville's first "speculation" developer was Meredith Miller, who purchased a square block bounded by Elizabeth, Stevenson, Mason, and Boyd Streets and, with his son James, who was the town's druggist, began home construction in 1884. Some of the oldest existing homes in Vacaville can still be seen in the 400 block of Elizabeth Street; many have now been adapted to commercial use.



Builder Will Hay is shown with his family in 1927 outside a row of houses he built on West Street between Luzena Avenue and Merchant Street. Later, when he grew tired of driving his daughters in from the country every day for school, he picked up his country house and moved it to

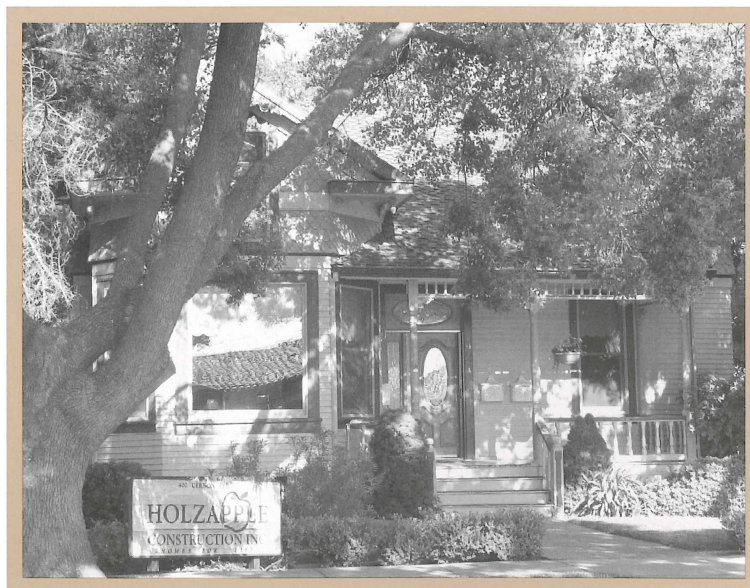
town at 224 Stevenson Street. Hauling the house with a tractor, it took a week to move, during which time his wife and daughters continued to live in the house. This house at 206 Stevenson is a one of the many Craftsman-style homes he constructed in Vacaville.





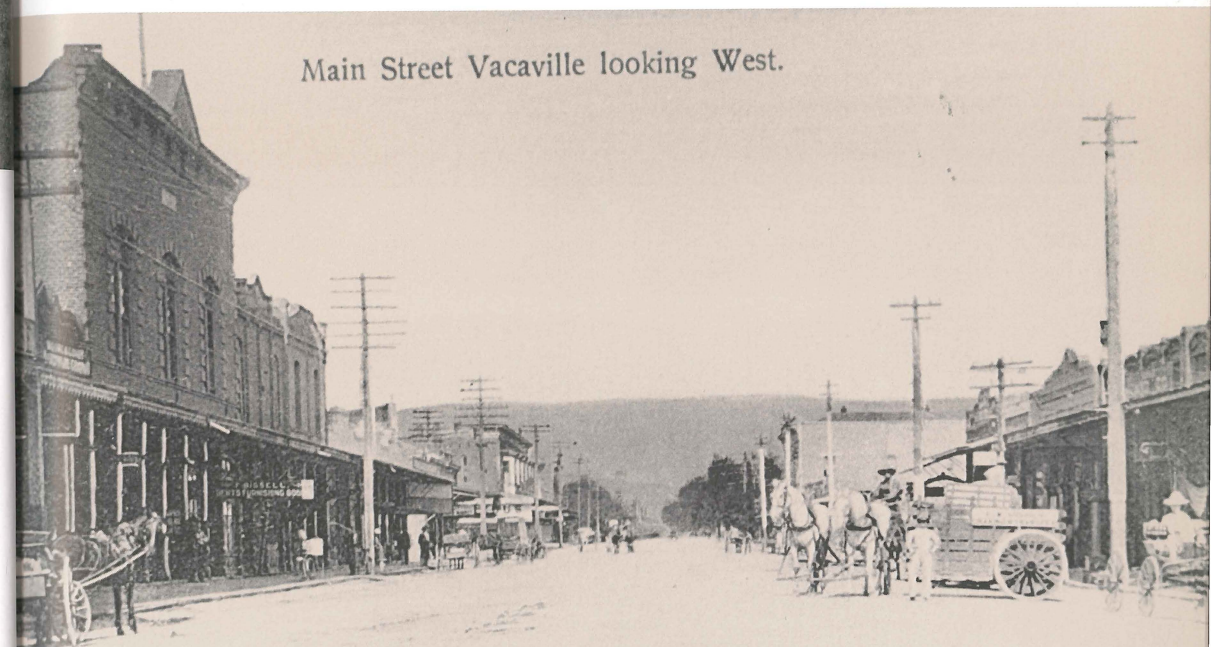
A representative example of the new master builders is Holzapple Construction, whose restored office at 400 Cernon Street is pictured. The home is

a wonderful example of the restoration work being done on the vintage housing stock surrounding the downtown area and out in the valleys.



CHAPTER 3

A STROLL DOWNTOWN



Main Street Vacaville looking West.

On the 100th anniversary of the dedication of Old Town Hall on July 17, 1907, stroll through historic downtown at a time when all merchants were located along Main Street and Buck Avenue was only two blocks long and called West Main Street. This 1908 postcard view shows Main Street

looking west from Davis Street; notice the absence of automobiles. Noisy automobiles spooked the horses and were banned from town on weekdays, when the fruit-wagons were delivering their loads to the trains.

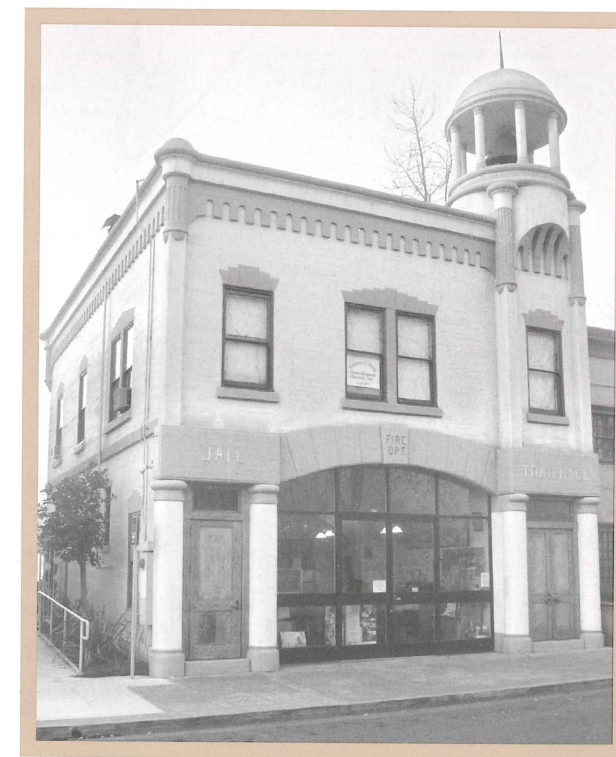


The southeast corner of East Main Street was for many years the location of George Akerly's first store, which opened in 1888. He sold everything from produce to hardware, most of it displayed on the wooden sidewalk outside the store. A large

watering trough was out front for the country folk to water their horses. His motto was, "If you can't find it at Akerly's, there is no use looking further." The building was demolished in 1972, and this is now the location of the KUIC Radio Building.



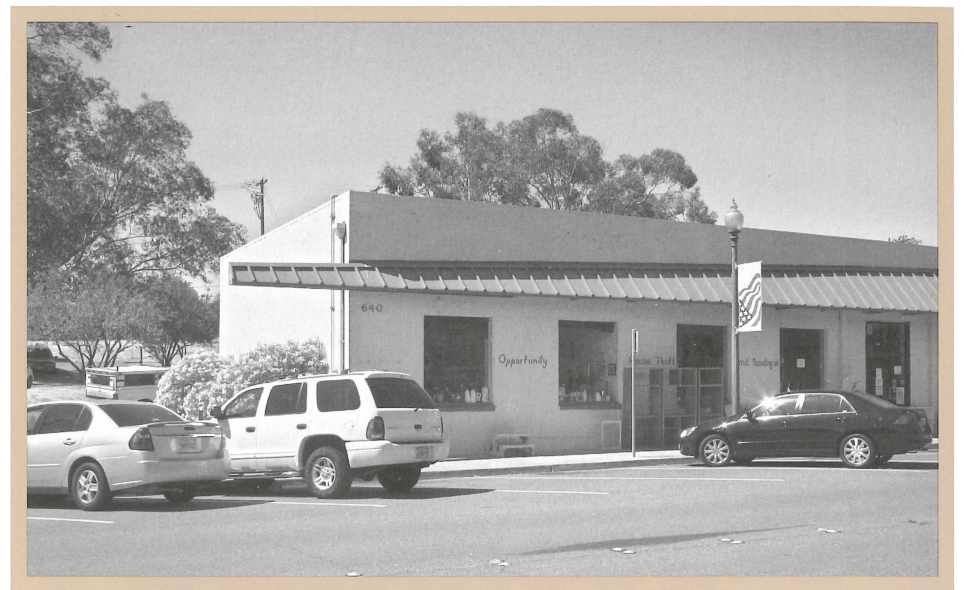
The town was incorporated on August 9, 1892, for the second time, and occupied rented quarters until 1907, when Old Town Hall was erected. Town hall was the location of all the functions of the town: the constable, marshal, courthouse, jail, and storage for two hose carts, which were pulled by hand by the fire volunteers. It is said that when the bell tolled in the middle of the night, it could "wake the dead." The police department and parks and recreation department were the last city occupants, and town hall is now the home to Vacaville Heritage Council Archives and the Solano County Geological Society Library.





Things have changed considerably for law enforcement since Joe Stadtfeld was the only constable. He kept his horses out back in a stable on Davis Street and shared his office space with the

Solano County marshal. In 2006, this new police headquarters building was dedicated as part of the city's office complex on Merchant Street.



On the corner of East Main and Wilson Streets, where Opportunity House now has their thrift store, was Al Bowle's large, tin, storage building that later was converted to a skating rink. Then came the fruit companies and loading docks. The train tracks were located four feet below street level so that the doors were level with the street

and the wagons could back up to the doors. The cars were heavily insulated, and 100-pound blocks of ice were placed in bunkers at each end before the train departed and at stops along the way. St. Mary's Church on Catherine Street, which was destroyed by fire in 1925, is pictured in the background.





Across the creek on School Street was the old Ulatis Grammar School. This two-story brick building was damaged in the 1892 earthquake. By 1908, the building was so unstable that builder George Sharpe was hired to design and construct a new wooden building at the same location. Seen

on the far left in this 1888 photograph is the old college building, which was replaced by the high school. The school district offices are now located at this site. Note the Lincoln Highway marker that is a reminder of when the highway to Sacramento ran through the heart of town.

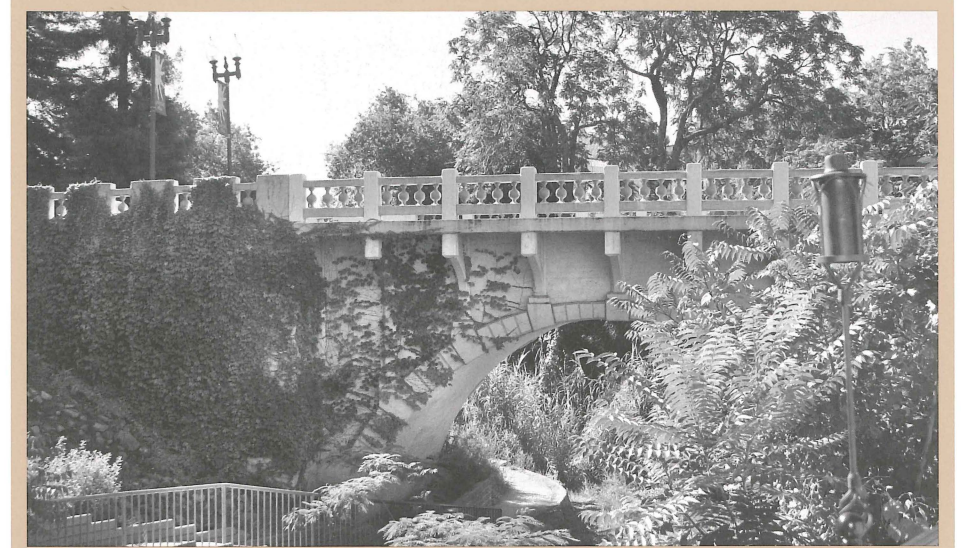


In 1929, a brick combination gymnasium and classroom building was added in front of George Sharpe's 1898 high school on the corner of College and School Streets. The building stood until it was destroyed by fire on July 30, 1954, ending the city's

hopes of converting the building for use as city hall. The school had already relocated its new campus. The Andrews Park Great Wonders Playground is located at the high point in the park, where the original high school building once stood.



A row of palm trees was planted in 1905 by Thomas Wilson, the son of Mason and Luzena Stanley, Wilson who were Vacaville's first hotel and restaurant proprietors. The Wilsons were the original owners of the School Street property and the surrounding area. Composed mostly of sandstone, holes had to be blasted in the creek bank before the 33 trees could be planted. Many of these trees still can be viewed along the creek.



County engineer Frank A. Steiger designed the Ulatis Creek Bridge, which today serves as the entrance to Carroll Plaza at the Creekwalk, in 1911. It replaced the old, wooden, horse-and-wagon bridge pictured, which had been almost washed away by the raging waters of the creek the year before. A Napa contractor named

Gildersleeve built the reinforced concrete bridge for \$7,870. With a span of 40 feet, it was 20 feet wide, separated by a railing from an additional 10 feet of walkway that was later combined with the road to allow two modern automobiles to pass. Shown is today's view of the bridge as viewed from the Creekside Bar and Grill patio.





Crossing the bridge, the first little shop was Polly Higgins's variety store, then came Nate Holt's cobbler shop, Grove's barbershop, and a saloon. The photograph shows the buildings as they would have been seen from Akerly's wagon as he prepared

to make his deliveries. By the 1920s, these old wooden buildings had all been replaced. The Creekside Bar and Grill, with a patio below street level overlooking the creek, is now located here.



The Wells Fargo Express office with Richard Rammers as agent came next; their horse and wagon met all of the incoming and outgoing trains to pick up and deliver express packages. Wooden's

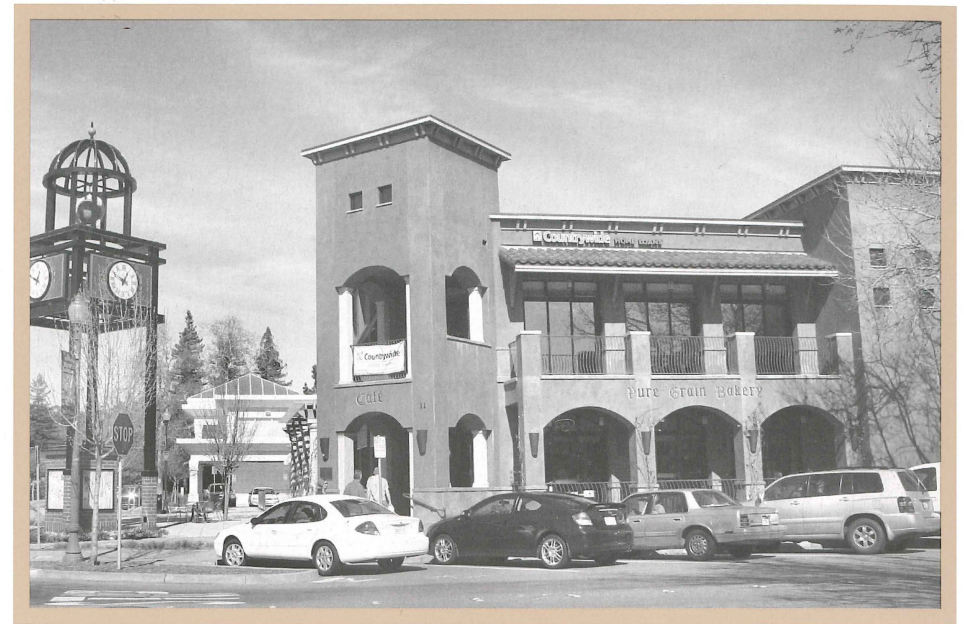
Harness Shop next door made and repaired harness, buggy, and wagon equipment. Saltato's Restaurant and the Spin-A-Yarn shop are now located here.





Gonsalves Saloon had a vat in the rear filed with grapes where his many children would get in and stomp the grapes to make wine. The saloon building

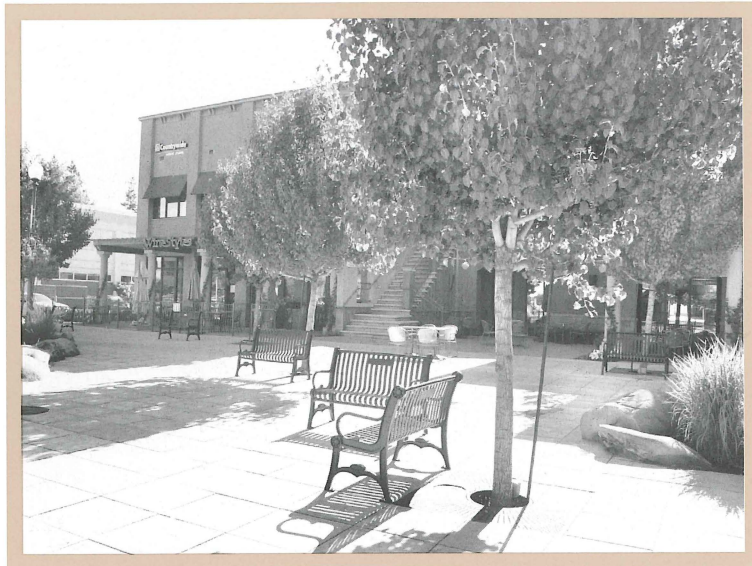
and Huey's Pub next door are the only structures remaining from the early 1900s; this one is now the location of the China House Restaurant.



In 1912, Vacaville Livery and Feed, which had been set back from the street, constructed a building to match the Killingsworth garage next door; it had an opening to their original barn in the rear. The Vacaville Garage, owned by Wiley Killingsworth,

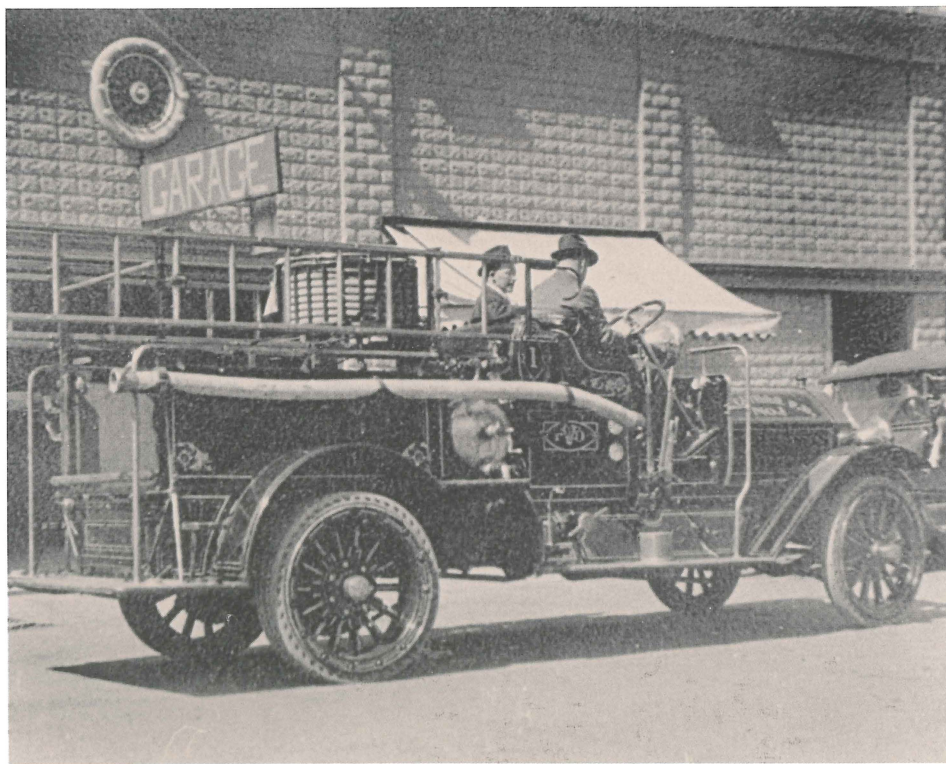
was on the corner of Bernard Street and had a center entrance. On one side of the entry was the garage, and Vacaville Water and Light Company was on the other. This is now the location of Town Square Plaza and Pure Grain Bakery.





The garage was the showroom for early automobiles, and Douglas Killingsworth taught the new car owners how to drive. He said some got confused, yelling "Whoa" to stop, forgetting the car was not their old horse. The Vacaville Garage

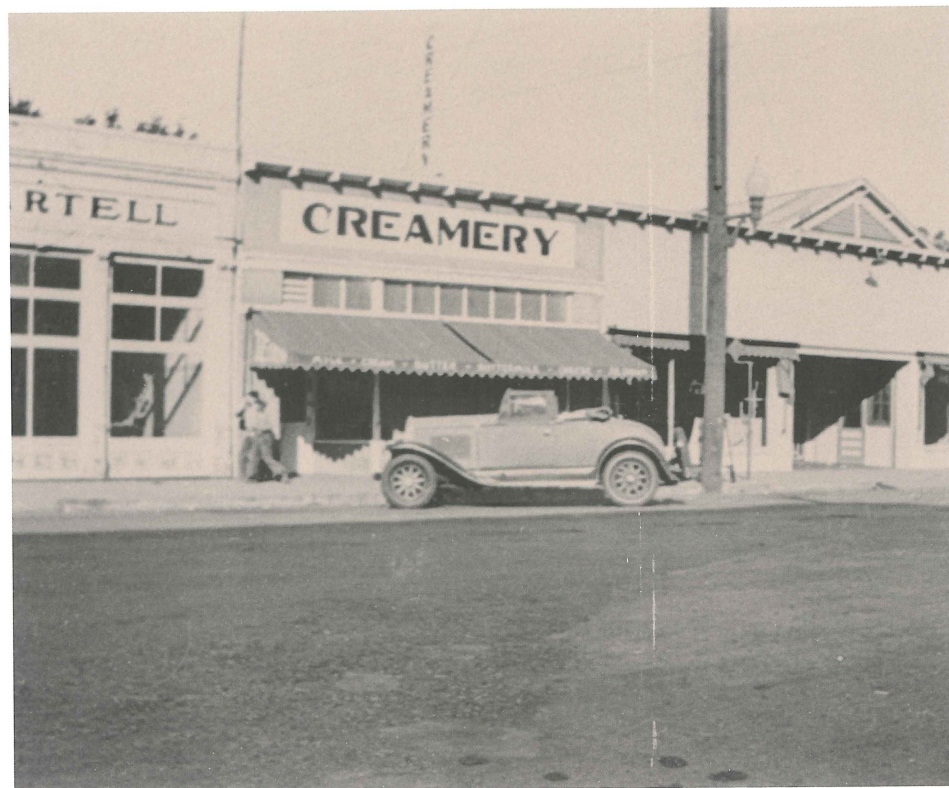
had a side door on Bernard Street, and when the town purchased its first motorized fire truck, which was too large for Old Town Hall, it was parked inside this door ready for the volunteers to climb aboard when the bell sounded.



Across Bernard Street (now Town Square Plaza) a large tin building used as a dance hall was set back from the street. On Saturday night, a three-piece orchestra was brought in from San Francisco to play. In front was the Vacaville Band Stand, a small, round pavilion that stood about six feet

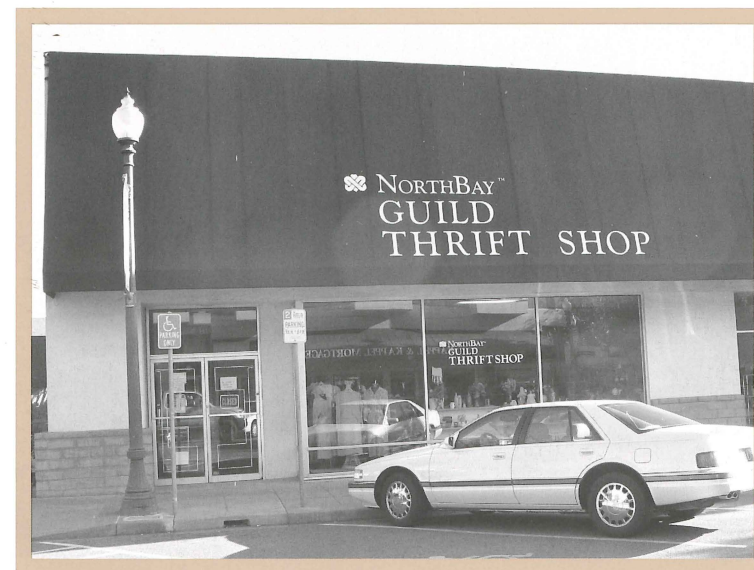
off the ground; people would come early to get a good spot to park their wagon for the evening's concert. George Neal was the conductor and trumpet player for the band that was composed of local talent.





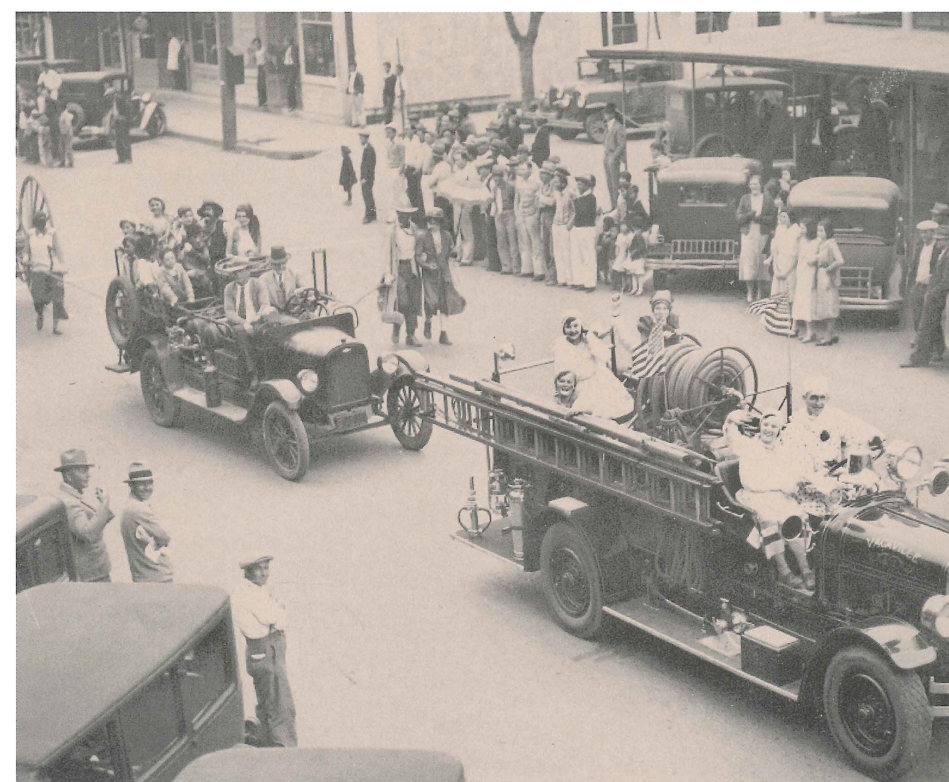
Hyde's Butcher Shop was the next building, and then the post office. Eliza Stitt was the postmistress, and Olive Foutz and R. R. Winters worked as her assistants. Everyone had his or her own post office box, as there was no home mail

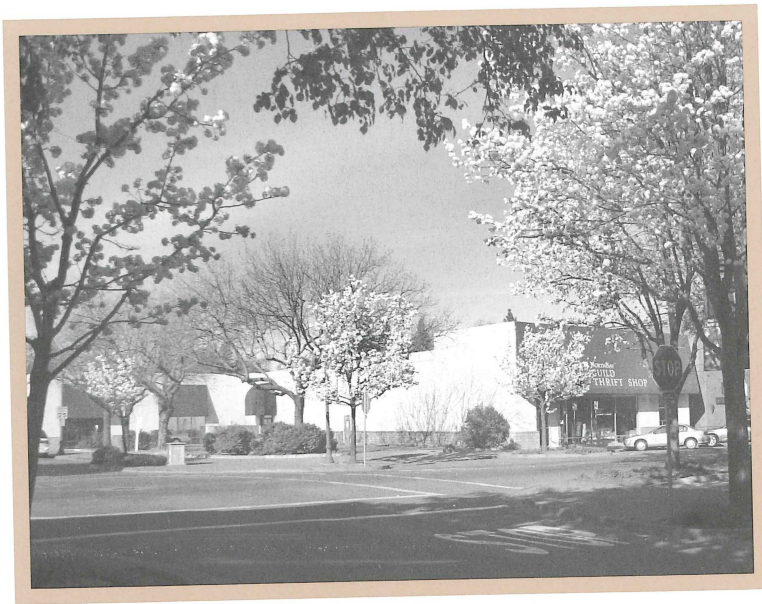
delivery service. Ed Miller's Ford Garage and Rudy Werner's Creamery later replaced the bandstand and these buildings. Los Reyes Restaurant is now located here.



Next was W. T. Sweeney's newspaper agency, which sold the Sacramento and San Francisco papers as well as bread and bakery goods that were brought in daily from the Bay Area. Sweeney's stepson, Elmer Thomas, delivered the papers

around town. In the next office was Ralph Platt, who would later serve as judge in Vacaville. Los Reyes Restaurant and North Bay Hospice's thrift store now share this space.





The Masonic Temple occupied the upper floor of the Schroeder Building—another George Sharpe creation on the northeast corner of Main and Dobbins Streets—along with Dr. Jenney's office and Cecelia Clark's beauty shop. On the ground floor were the telephone company and

the Schroeder and Frahm Hardware and Appliance Store, which later became Schroeder and Lawrence and then the location of Akerly's new store until it was destroyed in the fire that claimed the entire building in 1939. This is now the site of the North Bay Hospice's thrift store and parking lot.



At the opposite corner of Dobbins and Main Streets were Rachel Tucker's Millinery Shop and Tom Kowanda's Men's Tailoring Shop. J. A. Malone had a small store that carried a limited stock of groceries. Jessie Hay, who made all of her hats from scratch, had a very small shop next

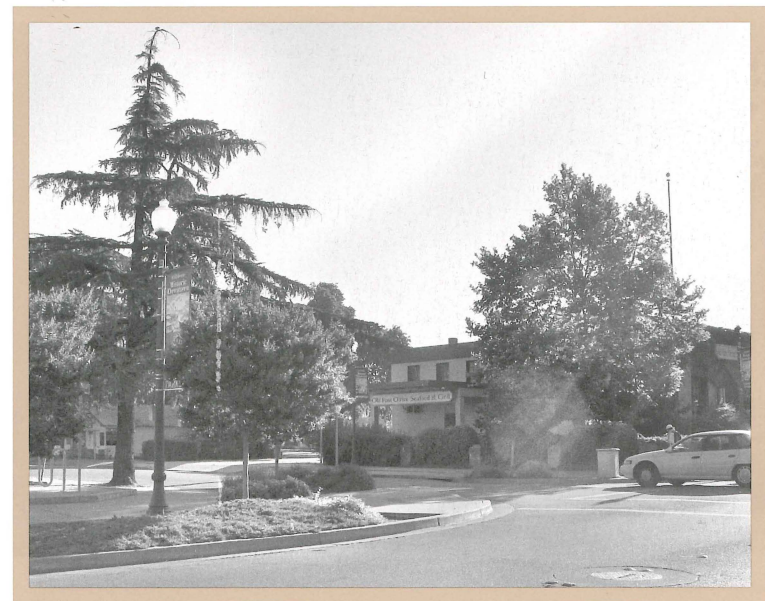
door. In the last small shop was the jewelry and watch repair business of H. J. Roach. Next was the mortuary operated by the Stewart family. This is now the location of the Chandler Building and Chandler Realty.





On the corner of Parker and Main Streets stood the Raleigh Hotel owned by Raleigh Barcar who also owned the *Vacaville Reporter*. Fire started in the wooden hotel on July 11, 1909, and embers ignited the steeple of the Presbyterian church across the street, now known as the Community Presbyterian Church. By the time the two-wheeled

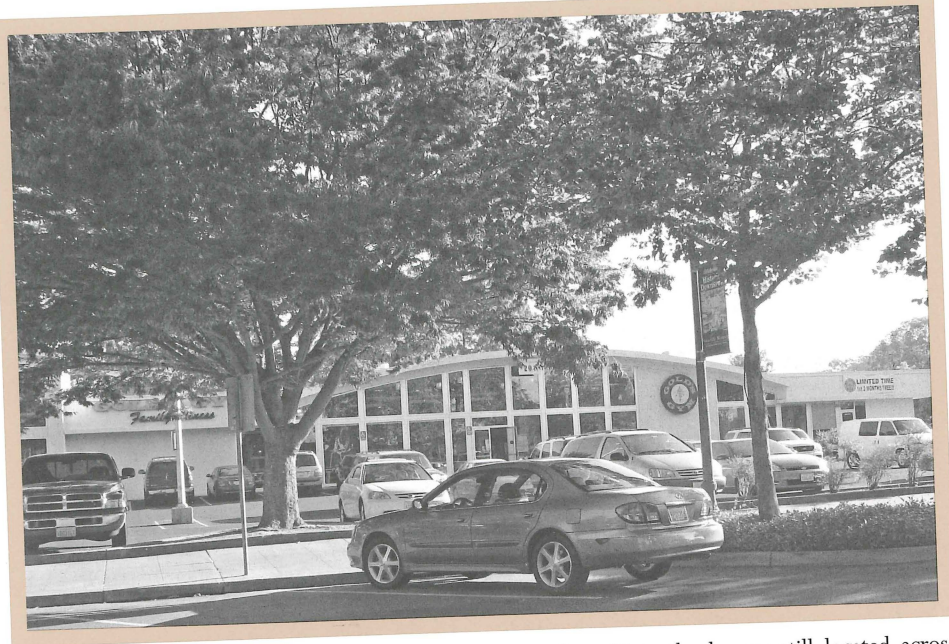
hose cart was pulled down the street, it was too late to save the hotel, but the firemen were able to pull the church steeple down with a rope and save the church. Once the location of the downtown post office, it is now the Old Post Office Seafood and Grill.



A new Presbyterian church was erected in 1892 to replace their former building that had burned, and the pastor's residence came next along Main Street. This marked the end of the business district,

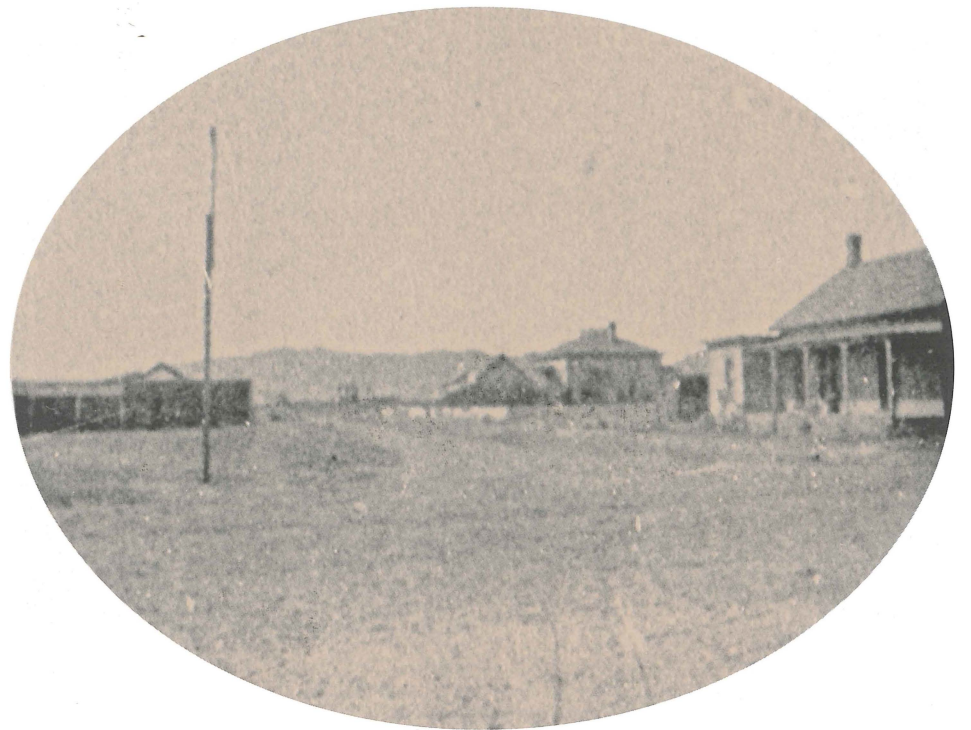
and the residential district continued out Main Street and two blocks along Buck Avenue (West Main Street) to the end of town.





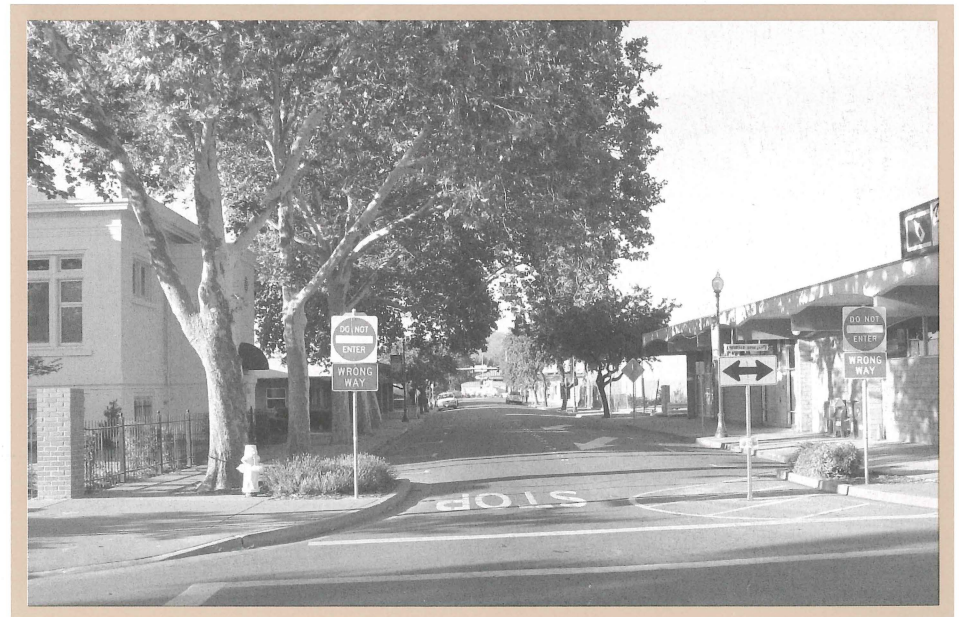
Shown in this aerial photograph from 1962 is the block bounded by Main, Parker, Kendal, and Cernon Streets. All of the buildings have been razed, including the church and the pastor's home, which were removed shortly after the photograph

was taken. Note the houses still located across Main Street. A new Safeway Store opened here for a while, and the building is now occupied by Gold's Gym.



This is a view down Parker Street from Main Street in 1888. The house on the right is on the southwest corner of Parker and was occupied by grocer Sterling Dobbins and his family in the early 1900s. The pole marks the location of the Carnegie

Library; this was once the location of Vacaville's first downtown parking lot, with spaces to tie up rigs and wagons while doing the family shopping. Today's view is quite different.





Across Main Street, the Carnegie Library building is visible. Through the fund-raising efforts of the Saturday Club, the lot was purchased in 1914 for \$3,000, and George Sharpe was awarded the building contract. It opened on July 17, 1915, was and lovingly referred to as "Ester's Library."

George's daughter, Ester Eldredge, became the librarian in 1945 and remained until her retirement 20 years later. In 1970, the library was relocated to the new city complex on Merchant Street, and the building is now home to the chamber of commerce.

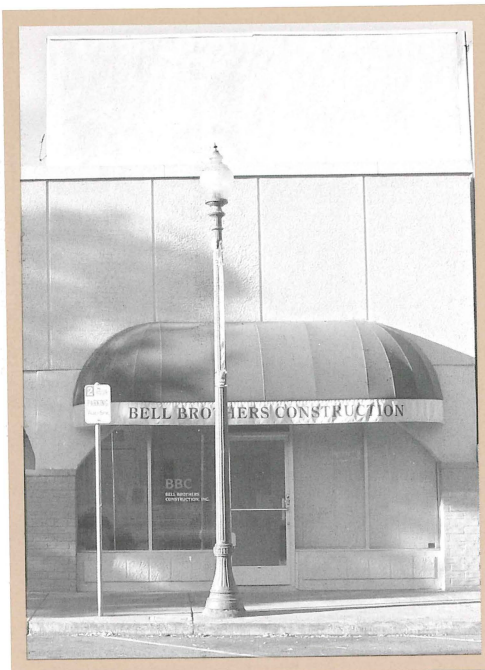


The theater site was also part of the wagon parking lot until July 1926, when W. J. Clark opened his theater. Designed for live performances and silent movies, it boasted a massive 600-pipe organ expressly designed for the theater and seating for 422 patrons. Jeweler Fred Deakin and another small shop used the first-floor interior. A ticket

kiosk was a separate structure out front, and three sets of double doors admitted patrons. By 1930, "talkies" had become the main attraction, and a new screen and Vitaphone equipment were added. This was Vacaville's only theater for many years. The building is not currently used as a theater.



The next three buildings have a new facade added to make them appear as one building, but in the 1900s, the first two-story brick structure was the last of the business buildings on this side of the street and was home to Miss Gilles's Millinery Store on the ground floor, with living quarters and the osteopathic office of Dr. Jerome Wirt above. Bell Brothers Construction now occupies the building.



The following item was listed in the *Vacaville Reporter* on March 26, 1898: "Raleigh Barcar-two story brick, 50X80 on Main Street with two large (retail) store rooms on the first floor and five large office rooms and the Ulatis Club rooms above. Also

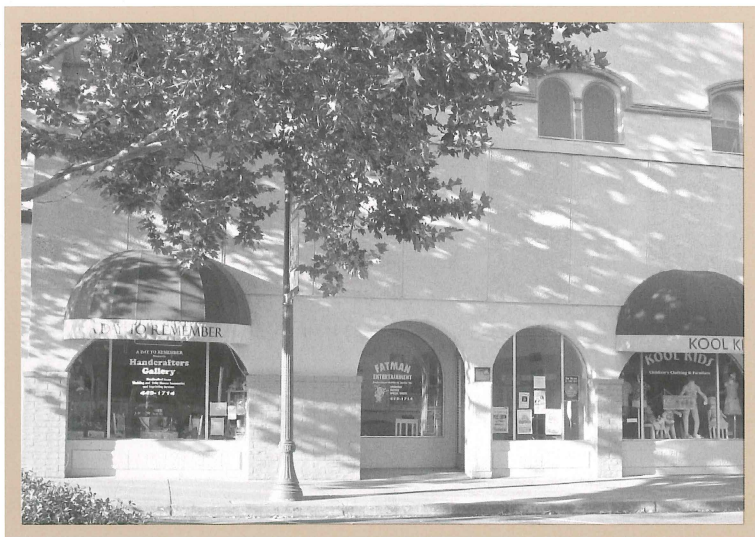
a one-story brick 25X80, built expressly for the Reporter Office, total \$9,500." Raleigh Barcar and Robert McMillan occupied a small law office to the left of the Reporter entrance. The Bella Terra shop is now located in the one-story section.





Evert Williams Ice Cream Parlor was next. Williams was the pianist for most hometown dances. Bert Deakin had a jewelry counter near the front entrance of the store. The other half of the building was occupied by William Godfrey's picture show, where silent movies were shown nightly. The fire department later occupied this space. The upper

floor was living quarters and a lodge hall, which was also used for ballroom dancing. The Moose Lodge met here until moving to a new building on Gibson Canyon Road. The Handcrafters Gallery, Fatman Entertainment, and Kool Kids clothing shop now share the ground floor.



Sterling Dobbins Grocery Store was for groceries only. Patrons usually did not come to the store; they would telephone the shop with their orders in the morning, and one of the three Dobbins boys

would take the horse and wagon to deliver them in the afternoon. Holly B's Bridal Boutique now occupies 344 Main Street.





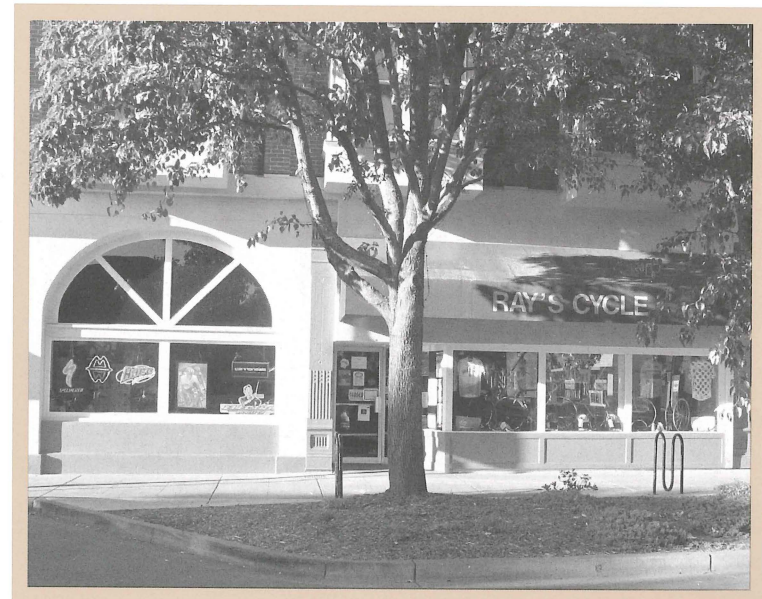
The wagon on the right is located at corner of Main and Dobbins Streets, where this brick structure was built by the Crystal brothers in 1889 for their dry goods store, which became the largest in town. The building was fronted by an awning that overhung the boardwalk along unpaved Main

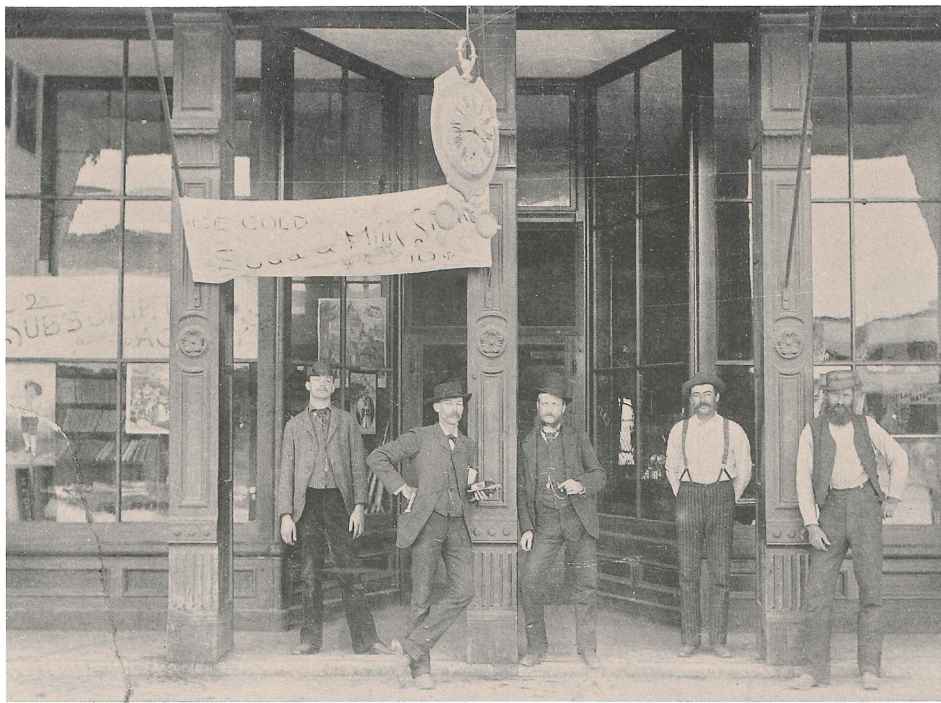
Street. Above the picture windows was a transom area of leaded glass with cast-iron pilasters running the entire length of the facade. Now divided into separate shops, part of the building retains some of the original 12 pilasters. Amphlett's Interiors and the Main Street Salon are the current occupants.



The Triangle Building, also called the Hutton Block, was built in 1897 by Frederick Hutton and presented to his wife, Charlotte. The store frontage has been modernized with tile and stucco, but the original brickwork and arched windows and doorways are visible on the sides and rear.

Elaborate cornice, dentil, frieze, and bay windows decorate the facade. The west end of the building was occupied by Schaffer's, an exclusive men's store. Ray's Cycle, a long-term tenant on the side of the building, now occupies the entire west end.





In 1911, the central portion of the Triangle Building was remodeled by George Sharpe for the First National Bank of Vacaville. The original vault remains in the basement from this remodel. James Miller's Drug Store, followed by Vacaville

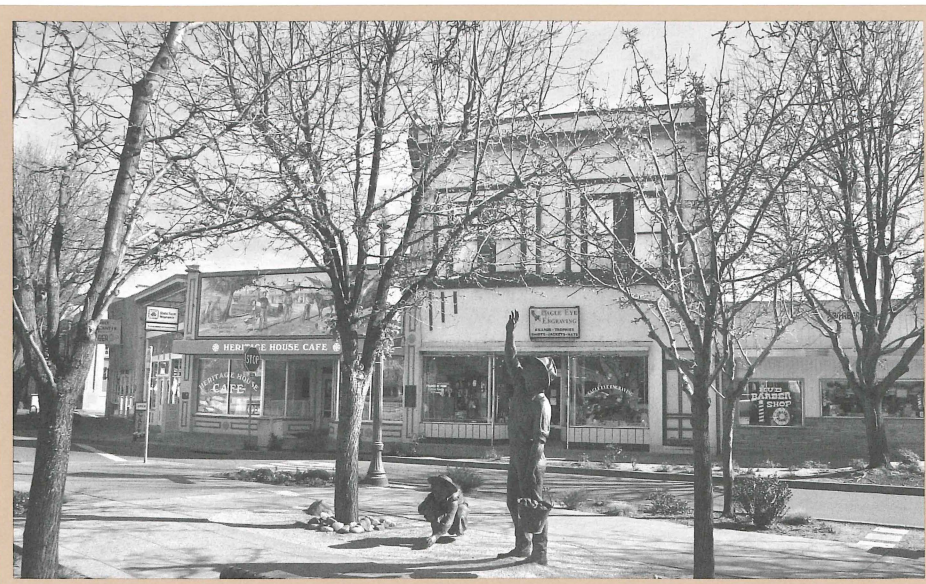
Drug Store, were the tenants in the east end of the building from 1903 until closing in 1991. The offices of Kappel and Kappel Mortgage are now located in the former drugstore space.



The corner of Merchant and Main Streets has two small buildings of note. The Heritage House Café is located near the site of the first merchandise store opened by E. F. Gillespie in 1854; it became an agent for Wells Fargo in 1857 and also was Vacaville's first post office. A

commemorative monument records the location as the Pony Express stop in 1865. The events are reflected in a mural atop the store. For a while, the Lorenzo family used the building for their Star Bakery, and it is now the home of the popular Heritage House Café.





The 1897, two-story brick building at 307 Merchant Street, was home to Karl Kopp's Vienna Bakery in the 1900s; a horse and wagon delivered his goods. Later known as Star Bakery, it was purchased by Frank Lorenzo and his two cousins for \$7,000. In 1938, the three partners bought out the California market, and in 1948,

Frank sold his share and built a market called the Vaca Valley Shopping Center on Merchant Street in partnership with his children, which they operated until 1970. Eagle Eye Engraving is now located here. Also shown are the two statues commemorating the area's past connection to the fruit growing industry.



Crossing Merchant Street, 438 Main Street was built in 1902 by George Sharpe for Trent Hewitt on land his father, Samuel, had purchased from the Blums in 1897. The Hewitt Jewelry Store shared space with R. L. Reid Drug Store, just as they

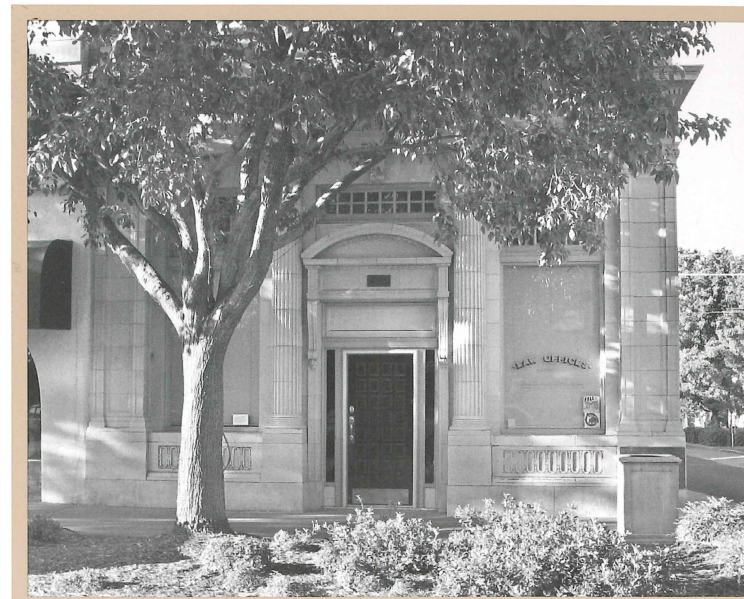
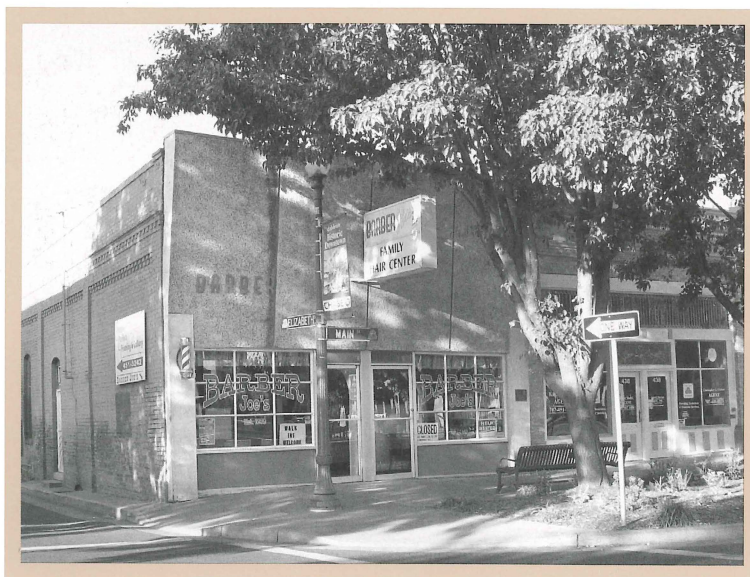
had done in their former location in the Walker Building. The drug store also had a soda fountain and was the postal telegraph office. This is now the office of State Farm Insurance.





The building at 444 Main Street was constructed as a meat market in 1902 on the site of one of Vacaville's first buildings that burned in the fire of 1888. Butch Akinson was the buyer and ran the slaughterhouse on Brown Street; Ceaser Pardi was the butcher and ran the shop. In 1940, the

Lopez family moved Barber Joe's to this location and later remodeled it to include the shop on the corner, which had housed Gillespie Cleaners, and updated the facade. The original 1902 brickwork can be seen on the side and rear of the building.



On the corner was Goldman Department Store, later owned by the Glickbarg family. The Bank of Vacaville purchased this location in 1921 and erected the current building. The Bank of Italy bought them out in 1923, shortly after the building

was completed, and later the name was changed to Bank of America. Judge Walter Weir occupied the building as his law offices when the bank relocated, and the law offices of Donald Stephenson now occupy the space.





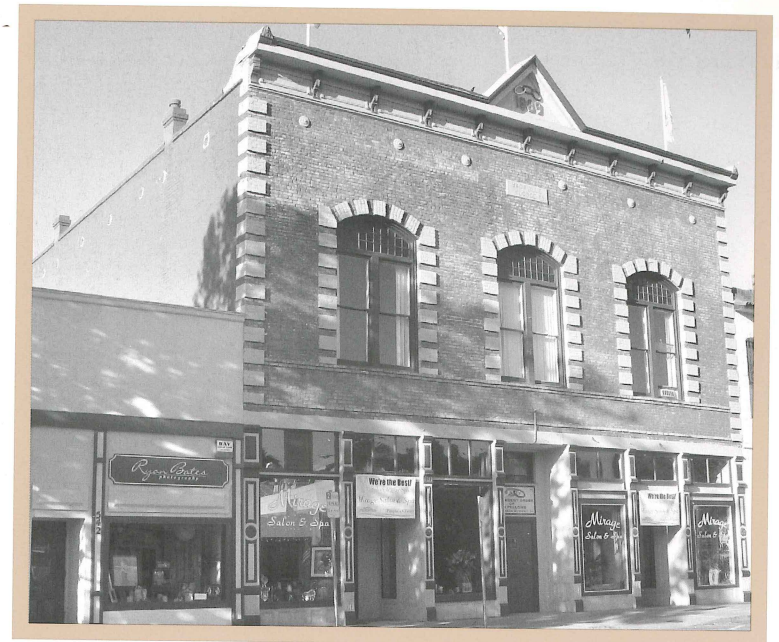
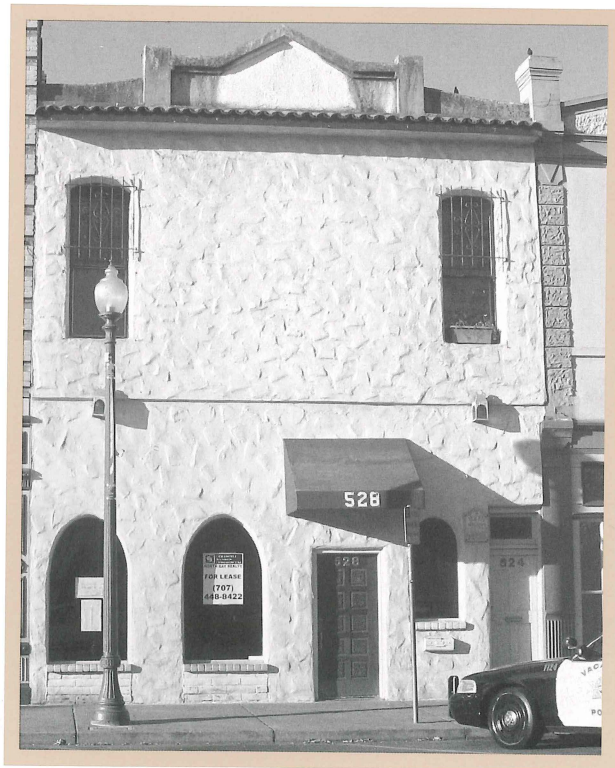
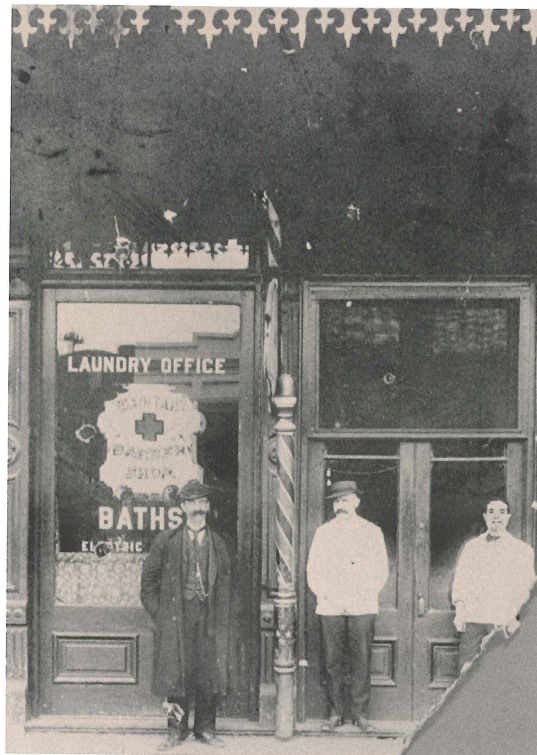
Built in 1885 by S. C. Walker, this building was home to the J. and I. Blum Mercantile Store, among others. In 1910, Anita and Nestora Lyon used the building as a movie theater. Awnings and

arches have been added to the updated facade, and Jackson Medical Supply now shares the space with the El Patron restaurant.



In November 1888, E. L. (Ray) Bennett replaced his wooden saloon with a new brick building after a fire destroyed most of the buildings along the south side of Main Street. The facade was decorated with stained-glass windows and inside displayed the finest wood paneling. Always sporting diamond shirt studs and rings, he put out the best free lunch to be found. The upper floor was used as living quarters. Used as a photographer's studio, much of the building's original charm is still apparent.

Constructed for McWilliams Grocery after the 1888 fire, 528 Main Street was later divided. Frank Deakin's Barber Shop, where one could get a 15¢ shave, a 25¢ bath, or a haircut, was in front, and Gus Maurer ran a cigar store and poolroom in the rear. The other half was Fred Bissel's Haberdashery and also the Western Union telegraph agent. The site was then a long succession of restaurants. The new owners hope to remove the stucco that now hides the original facade.

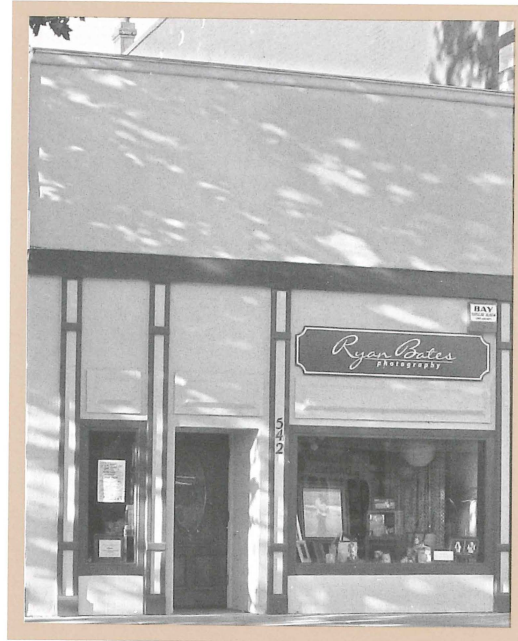


The I.O.O.F. Building at 534 and 536 Main Street proudly displays the date 1889 on the facade that was toppled in the 1892 earthquake. Quickly restored, it is a grand example of past architectural style. The lodge hall upstairs was a popular dance hall, as it had the only maple hardwood floor in town, and was used also by the Episcopal church

until their building at Main and West Streets was completed. Down below, the saloon in the Burns Hotel, owned by Johnny Burns, also served a free lunch. The Mirage Salon and Spa occupies the ground floor, and the Independent Order of Odd Fellows still meets upstairs.

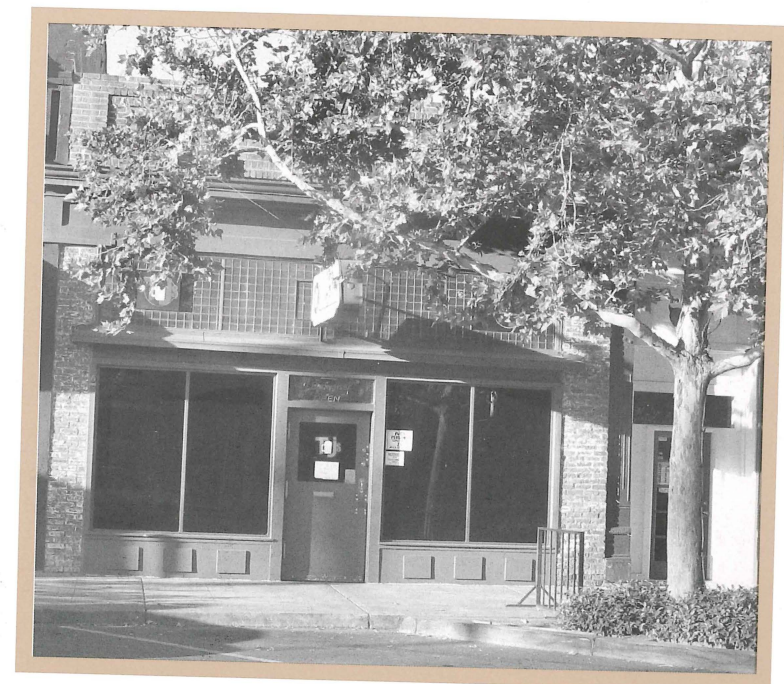


The Bank of Vacaville, where Ed Fisher was the cashier, occupied 542 Main Street from 1902 until 1921, when it relocated to its new office at the end of the block on the corner of Elizabeth Street. In 1890, Hacke's Hardware was located at 548 Main Street and later became the Winfield family hardware store. Built in 1897 as Arnold and Bugbees Hardware Store, George Arnold occupied 554 Main Street in the 1900s with a small mercantile. The old facades of all three are hidden beneath false fronts, but hints of the past can be viewed from the rear. Ryan Bates Photography now occupies the old bank building.



The Walker Opera House building at 560 Main Street held a grand concert on opening night on September 25, 1897, in an elegant, 600-seat theater. But opera was never a hit in Vacaville, and the building was used for picture and stage shows and high school dances. In half of the

ground floor was Edstrom's Ice Cream Parlor and Candy Store, which offered curb-side service to the ladies seated comfortably in their own buggies. TJ's Lounge now occupies the Arnold and Bugbees location at 554 Main Street.





On the corner was a grocery store operated by Rolla Gray and the Grand Theater, and in the rear was the Ulatis, an exclusive men's club, which was entered through a door on Davis Street. The upper floor was unused for a long period

of time before the Masonic Lodge took it over in 1939 after fire destroyed their building. Today Merchant and Main Catering use the upper floor for luncheons and special occasions.



CHAPTER 4

THE VALLEYS



Looking down from the Zimmerman Ranch in Upper Vaca Valley there are only orchards and fields as far as the eye can see; the few buildings that make up the town of Vacaville are visible in

the upper right corner of the photograph. Today this view would be an orchard of houses rather than trees.



Many wagonloads of fruit were shipped from this packing shed, a part of the vast Bucktown fruit growing operations of Congressman Frank Buck until the summer it burned to the ground. The tall wagon loaded with baskets of peaches fresh

from the orchards is driven by Ernie Laferriere in this 1914 photograph, and Frank Buck is standing in front of it in the white helmet. This barn on Bucktown Lane is the only one of the original buildings still to be seen among the orchards.



Edward R. Thurber purchased 168 acres of farmland along Pleasants Valley Road in 1858. A pioneer in the valley fruit industry in the 1890s, his ranch was one of the largest in the valley. A bridge designed by Solano County engineer Frank Steiger was built in 1907 crossing the creek on the

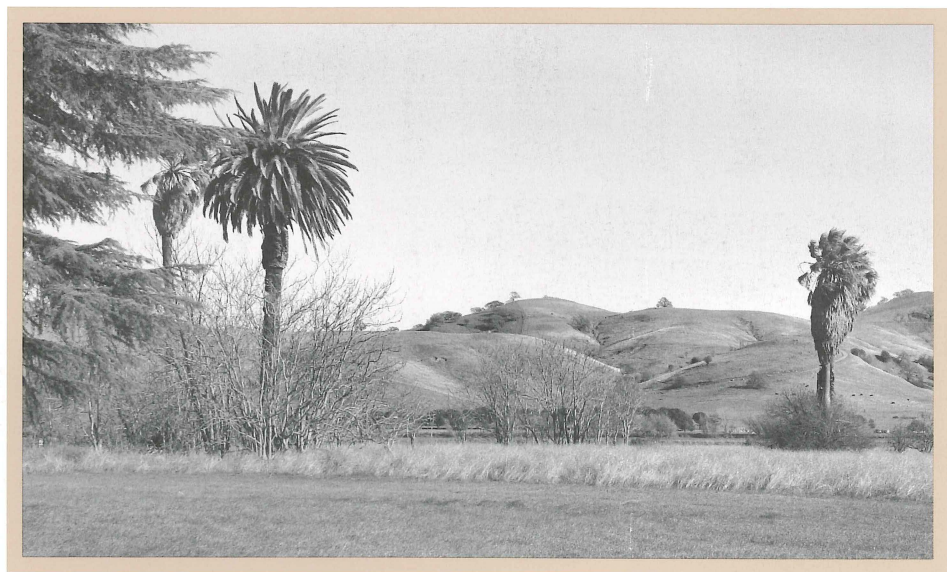
road adjoining his property, which was dedicated on the 100th anniversary of its construction on April 29, 2007, in the name of Edward R. Thurber. The present owners have completely restored the original ranch house.





In 1884, Eliza (Elsie) Buckingham purchased a home and 400 acres of land in Lagoon Valley from Jose Demetrio Peña where she planted pears, figs, walnuts, and vines. The most successful female fruit rancher of her time, Buckingham made Lagunita Rancho her home until her death in 1915. In 1888,

she acquired 1,000 acres in the Butcher Tract, naming the area Ariquepa Rancho. Subdividing half into smaller parcels and selling them at auction, she more than recovered the purchase price of the land. Only the line of trees, split by I-80, that once lined the road are visible today.



W. B. Davis, who settled on his ranch in 1853, was one of the first ranchers in the area to venture into fruit growing. He was also one of the founders of Vacaville's first bank, the Bank of Vacaville. His granddaughter Hellen Davis was a well-known celebrity harness racer and the first woman to win

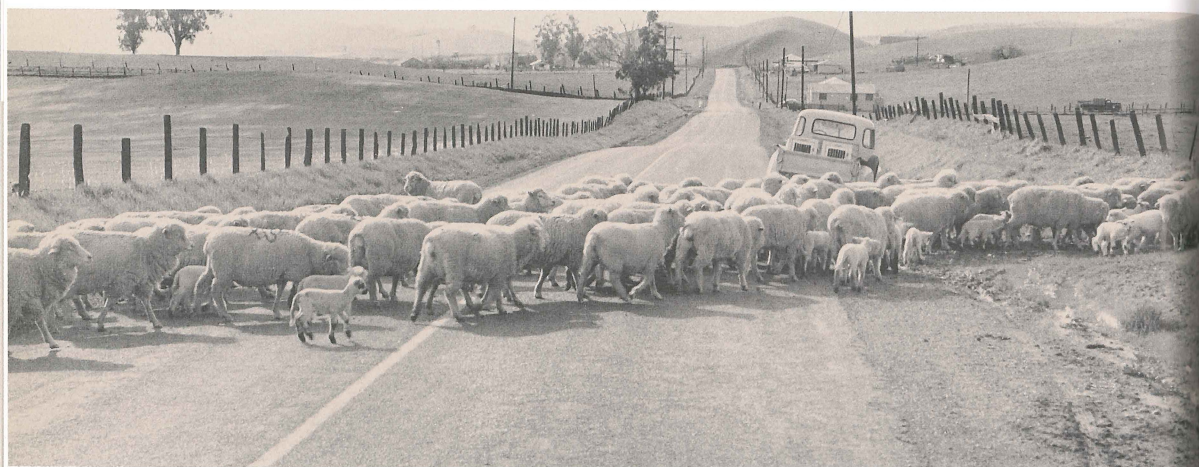
at the state fair in 1928. The ranch, located across Sacramento Road (East Monte Vista Avenue) from the Harbison ranch (where the Nut Tree is located), is now the location of the Vacaville Premium Outlets.





This photograph of a Mr. Peter's sheep crossing Browns Valley Road taken in the 1950s reflects an era when all of Browns Valley was ranch land. The current photograph gives only a hint of the

development that has taken place, with the barrier marking the end of the sidewalk just beyond Vaca Valley Parkway, and hidden just over the hill are hundreds of new homes under construction.



CHAPTER 5

TRANSPORTATION



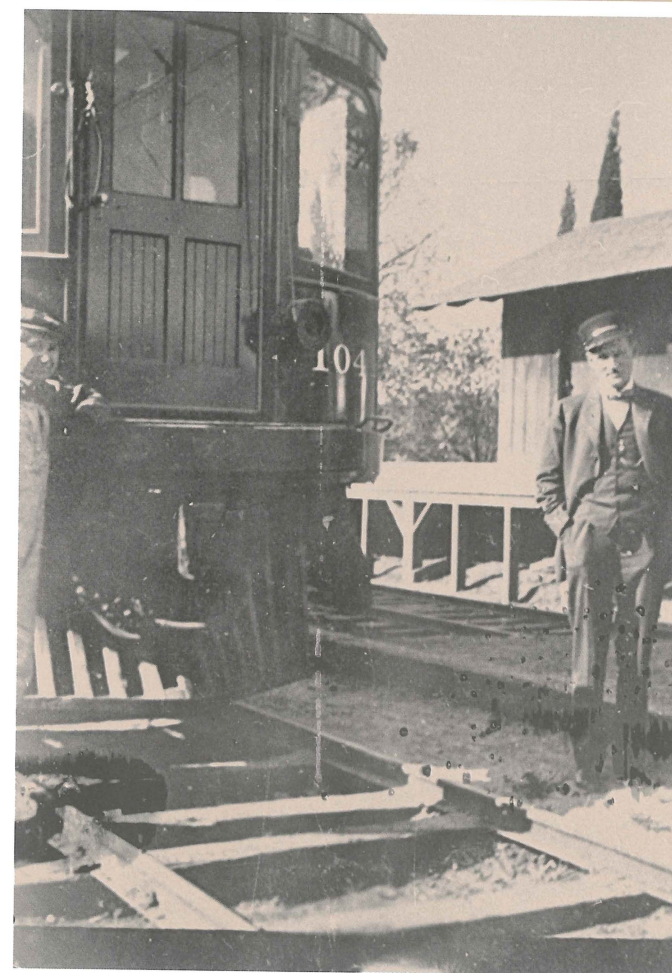
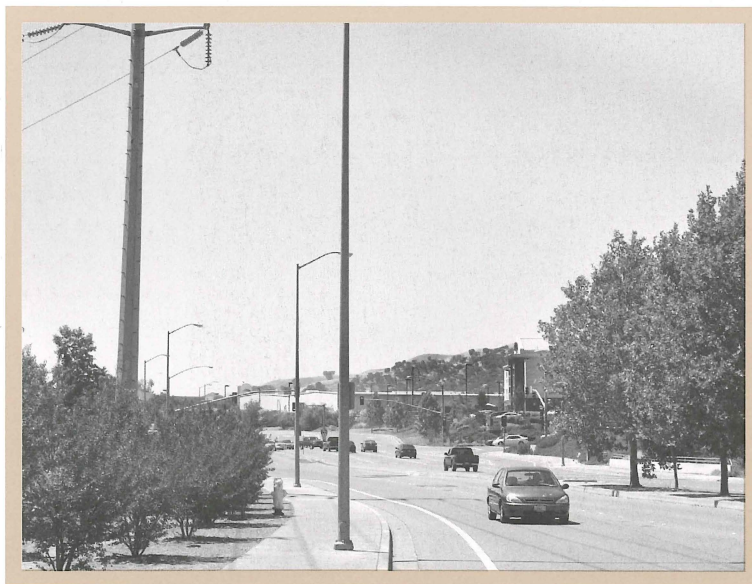
Pictured is the John Mix family out for a Sunday ride, perhaps leaving their ranch in Mix Canyon for Sunday church services in the late 1800s. Not everyone had the luxury of such a fine rig; many

people came to town along the dusty road with the wagon and team that was used to work the ranch during the week.

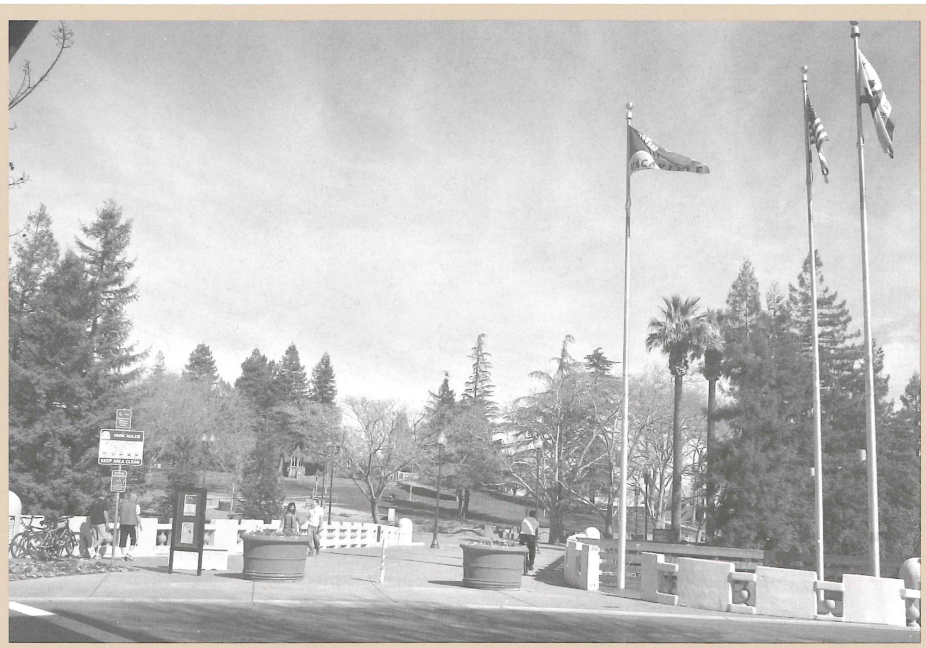


In July 1868, the tracks of the California Pacific Railroad finally reached Vaca Station (near Elmira), providing a faster mode of transportation to the shipping ports of Vallejo. Soon the little Vaca Valley railroad was completed to the junction in Elmira, and its engine made daily trips with the harvests from Vacaville. In 1877, the line was reincorporated as the Vaca Valley and Clear Lake Railroad and the

line extended to Madison. Dreams of completing the line to Mendocino County and its timber supply were never realized. In 1888, the line was taken over by Southern Pacific and extended to Rumsey. Today Depot Street is only a few blocks long, leading to today's mode of transportation—the freeway.



In May 1914, electric interurban service began between Vacaville and Suisun. With four trips daily, the trains stopped in the Portland Cement Company town called Cement, located off Peabody Road between Fairfield and Vacaville, enabling the workers to reside outside the company town. The hope of providing freight service, breaking the monopoly of the Southern Pacific and reducing freight rates, was never realized, as passengers generated 90 percent of their revenue. Struggling through several changes in ownership and unable to compete with the automobile, it stopped carrying passengers in 1926. The tracks ran along Davis Street, terminating near where the California Automobile Association and First Northern Bank now have their offices.



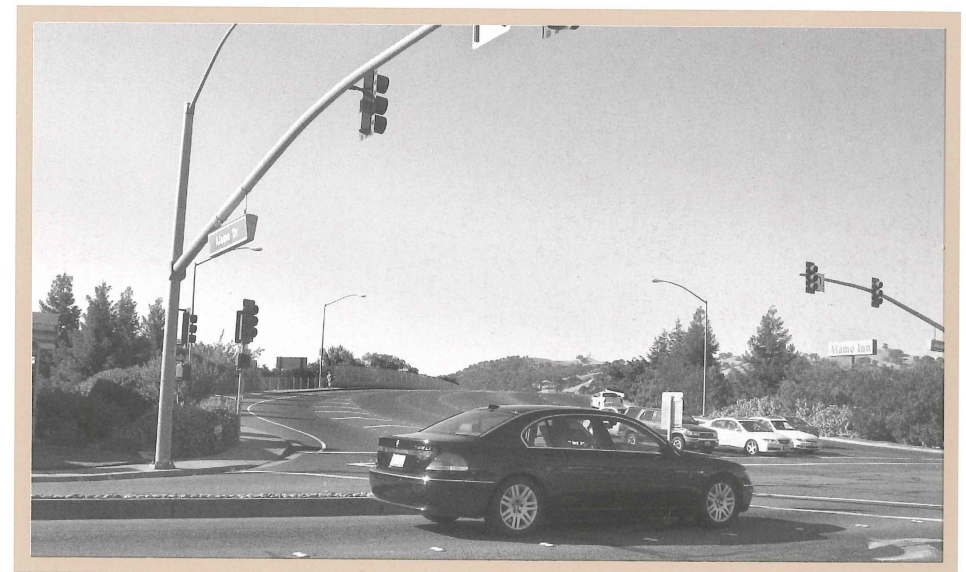
The Lincoln Highway, between San Francisco and Sacramento, was completed through Vacaville in 1912 and would shape the area for many years to come as restaurants, service stations, and auto courts sprung up to serve the travelers who came over the bridges on Cherry Glen and Butcher

Roads and followed Merchant Street into the heart of town. Traffic was confused in the early days because of a lack of road signs, as reflected in this picture of a hand-painted sign and arrow to direct traffic down School Street and out of town. Today only bicycles and pedestrians travel this route.



There was not a street named Alamo when this new Interstate 80 overpass was built in 1961, but its construction would change Vacaville completely as development now expanded to the south side of town and up the hill on the north, with new shopping centers and service stations to serve all

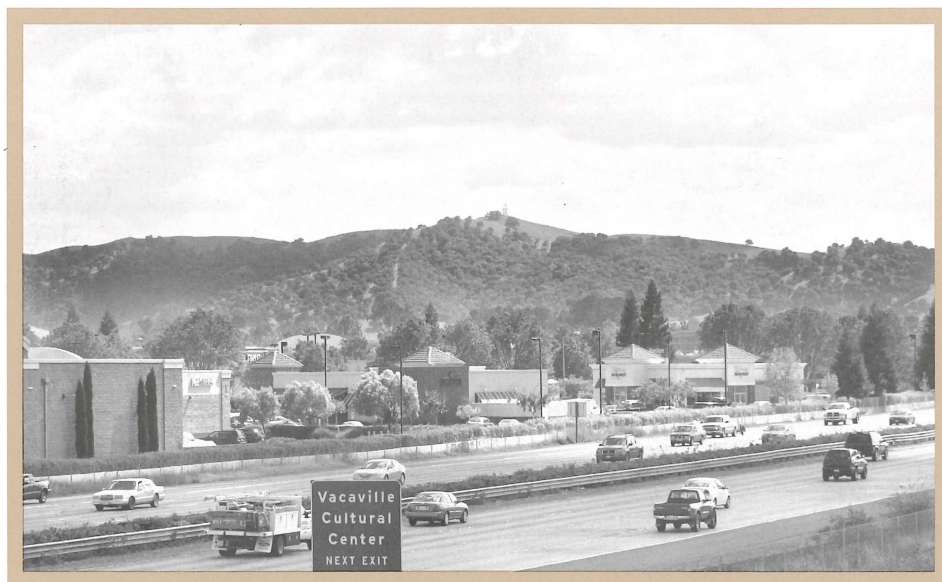
the new residents. The population of Vacaville, which had been about 10,000 in 1960, would nearly double in each of the next three decades until annual limits were placed on the number of permits issued for new housing units.





Growth also is evident along the eastern edge of town, as these photographs taken from the freeway overpass reveal. The 1961 photograph from the Allison overpass shows only open fields

along the freeway, and the current photograph, taken looking back from the next overpass at Nut Tree Road, shows the tremendous growth that has taken place over the years.



Merchant Street seemed totally devoted to the automobile when a prankster from the Fiesta Days Committee hung "Bad Sam" from the stoplight at

the corner of Elm Street in May 1973. Note the 35.9¢-per-gallon gasoline at the Gulf Station. What a difference.

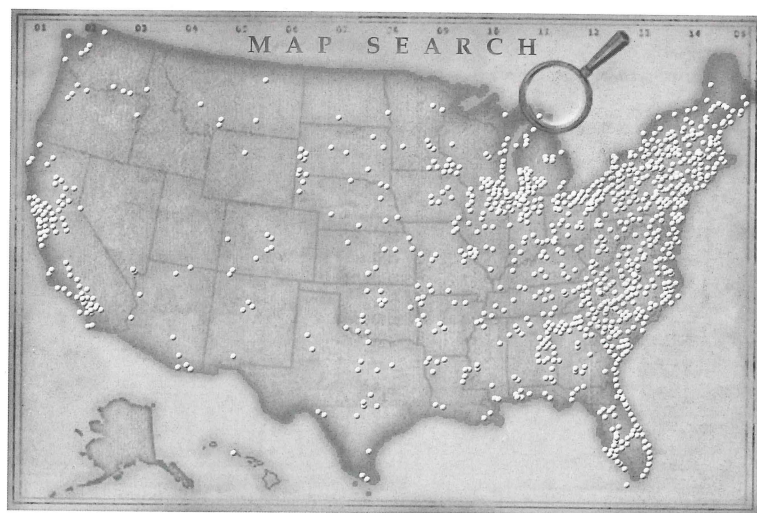


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VACAVILLE

One hundred years after it was settled by the Vaca and Peña families in 1842, Vacaville's population still numbered only 1,608 people. The population was booming by the 1960s, doubled in each of the next two decades, and was home to 96,395 people by 2006. While experiencing some growing pains, the city enjoys small-town pleasures, festivals, parades, and concerts in the park. Author Carole Noske and photographer Brian Irwin use Vacaville Heritage Council archives to present a picture of Vacaville today, with links to the colorful past.

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ISBN-13 978-0-7385-5563-8

ISBN-10 0-7385-5563-0



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